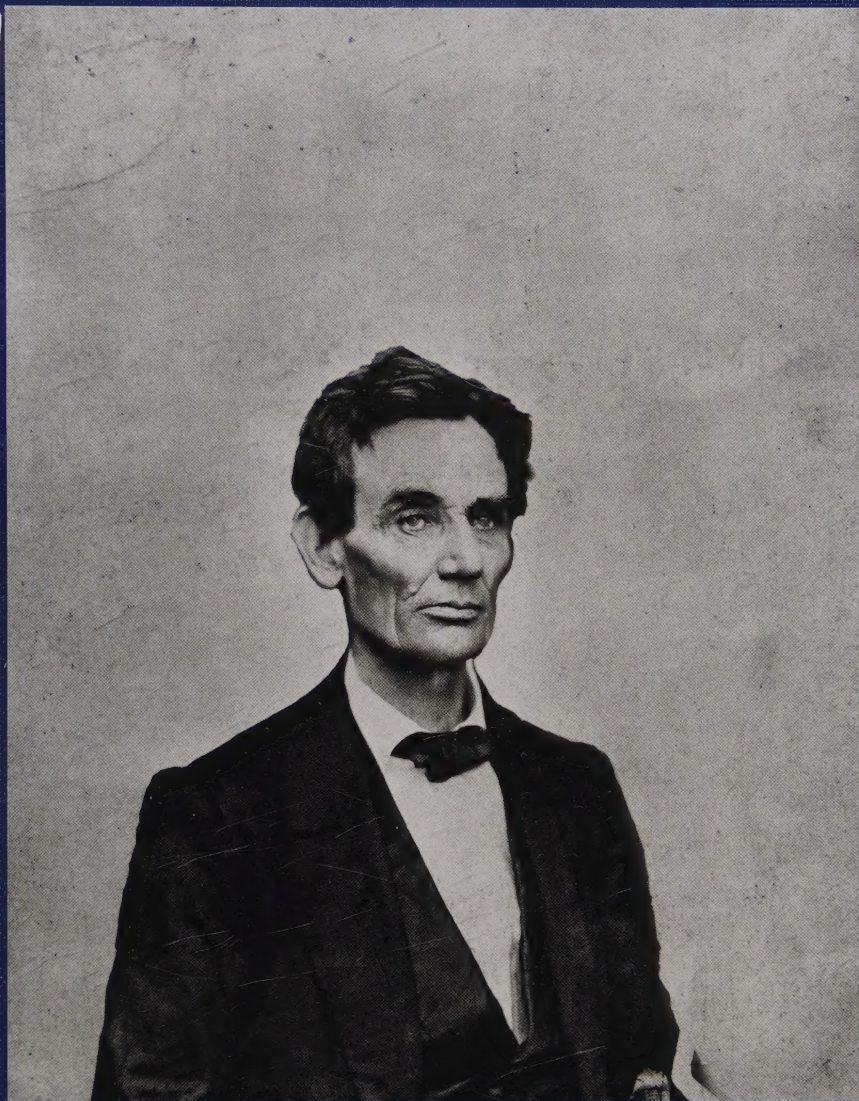


# THE PHOTOGRAPHS *of* ABRAHAM LINCOLN



STEIDL  
MESERVE-KUNHARDT  
FOUNDATION















THE PHOTOGRAPHS *of* ABRAHAM LINCOLN







# THE PHOTOGRAPHS *of* ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Edited by Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.

With contributions by  
Harold Holzer and Philip B. Kunhardt III

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This book is dedicated to William Neal Meserve  
and his descendants who made it possible:

Frederick Hill Meserve  
Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt  
Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.  
Philip B. Kunhardt III  
Peter W. Kunhardt

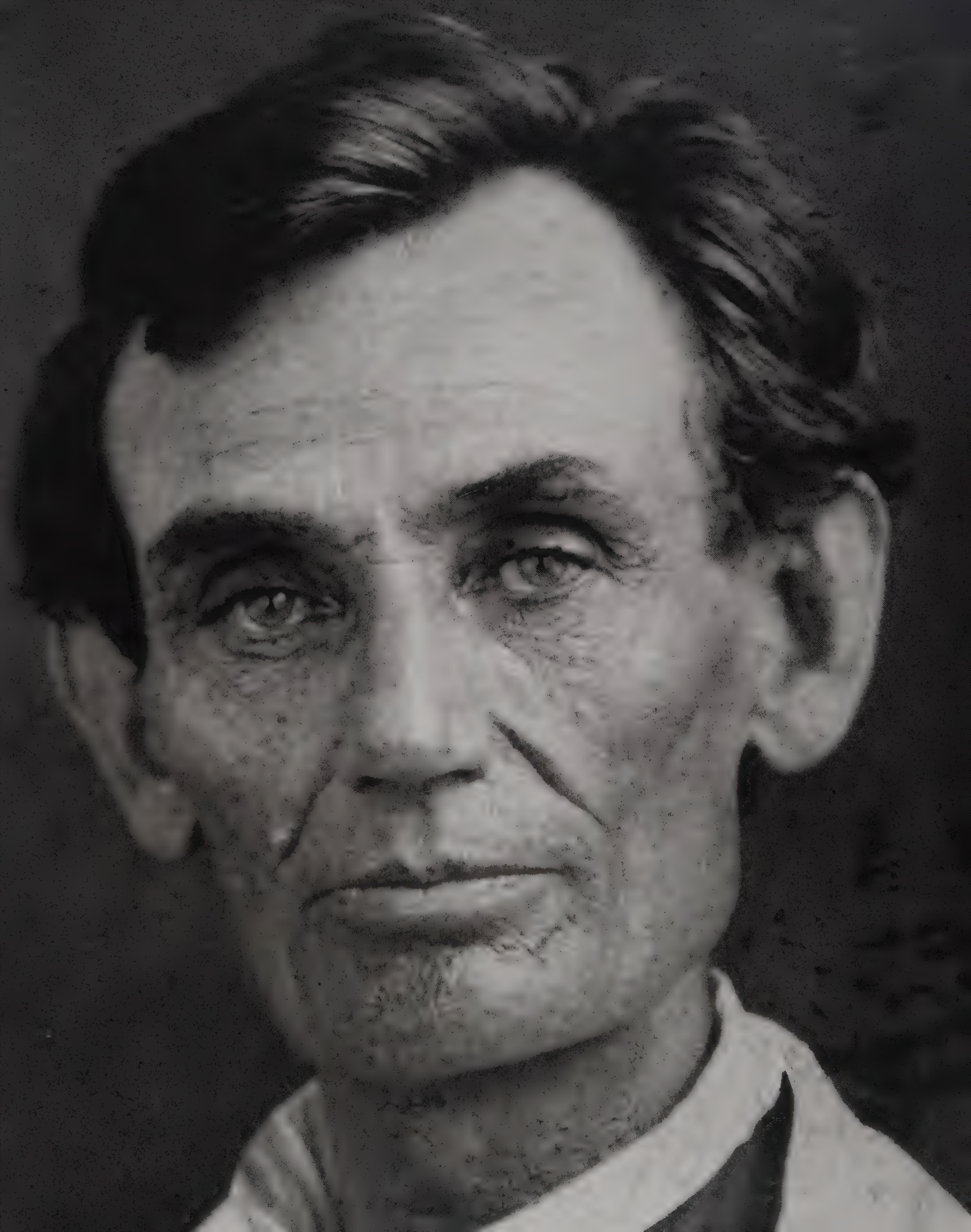
PETER W. KUNHARDT, JR.



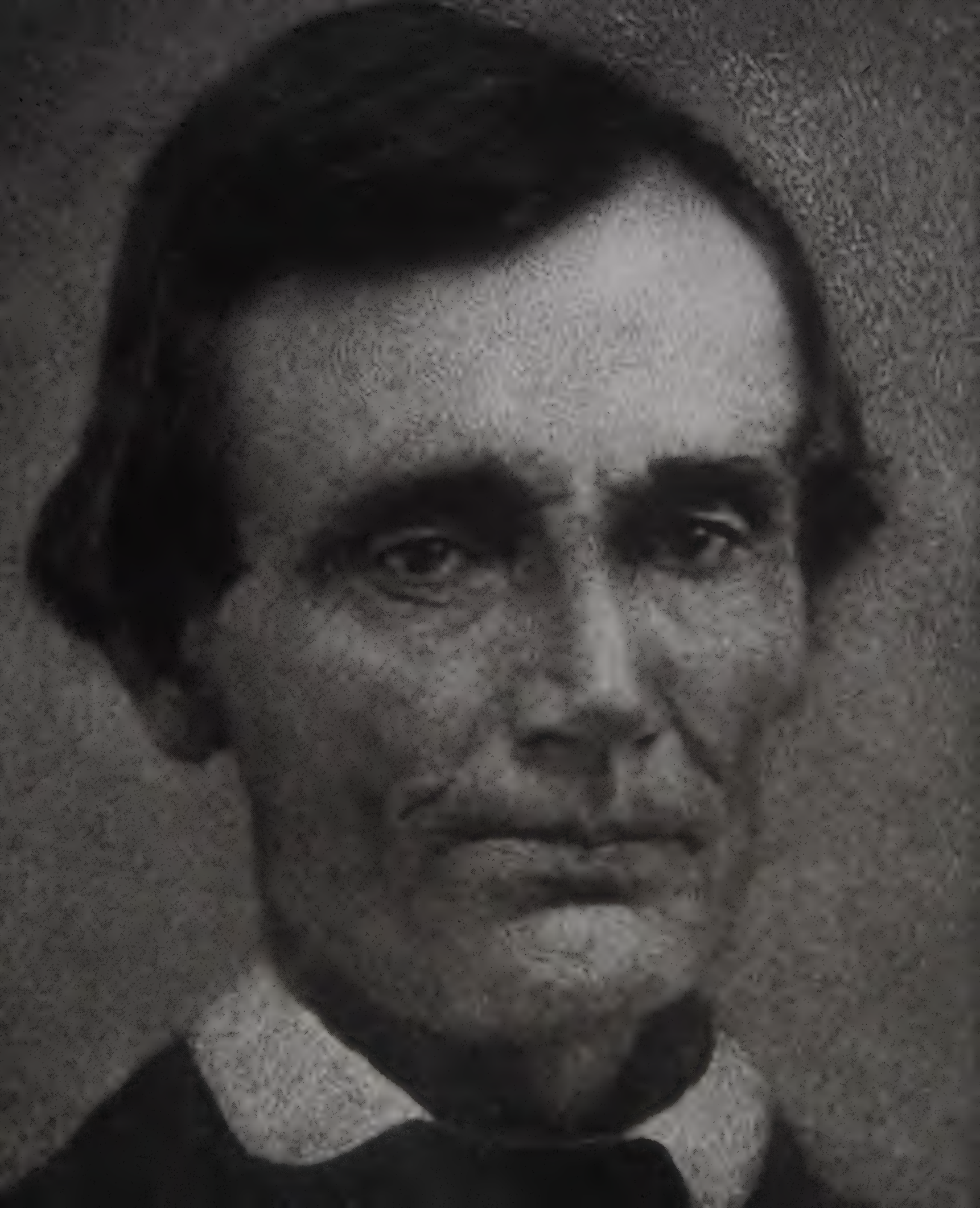
If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said, I am, in height, six feet, four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on an average, one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and grey eyes—no other marks or brands recollected.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 1859

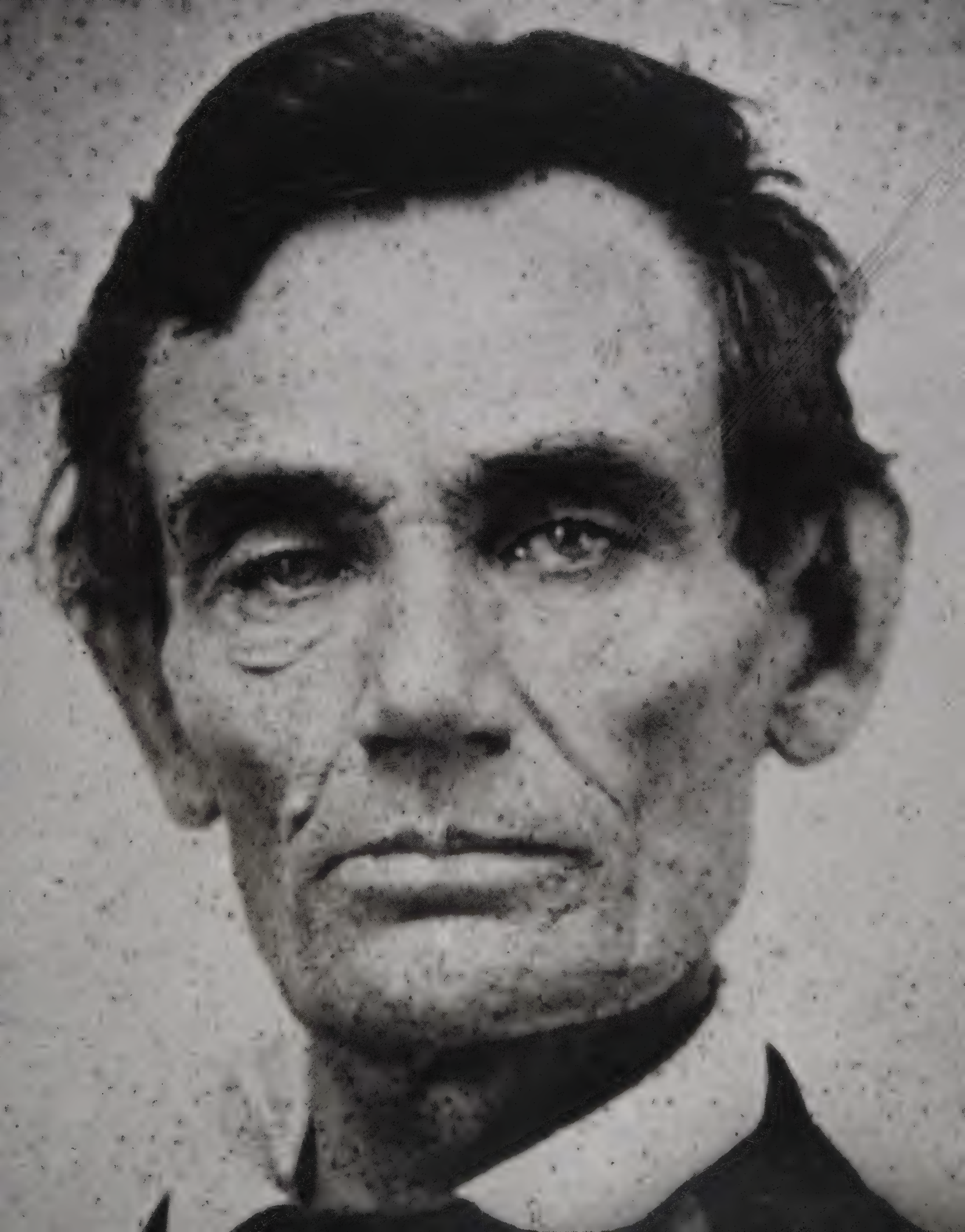








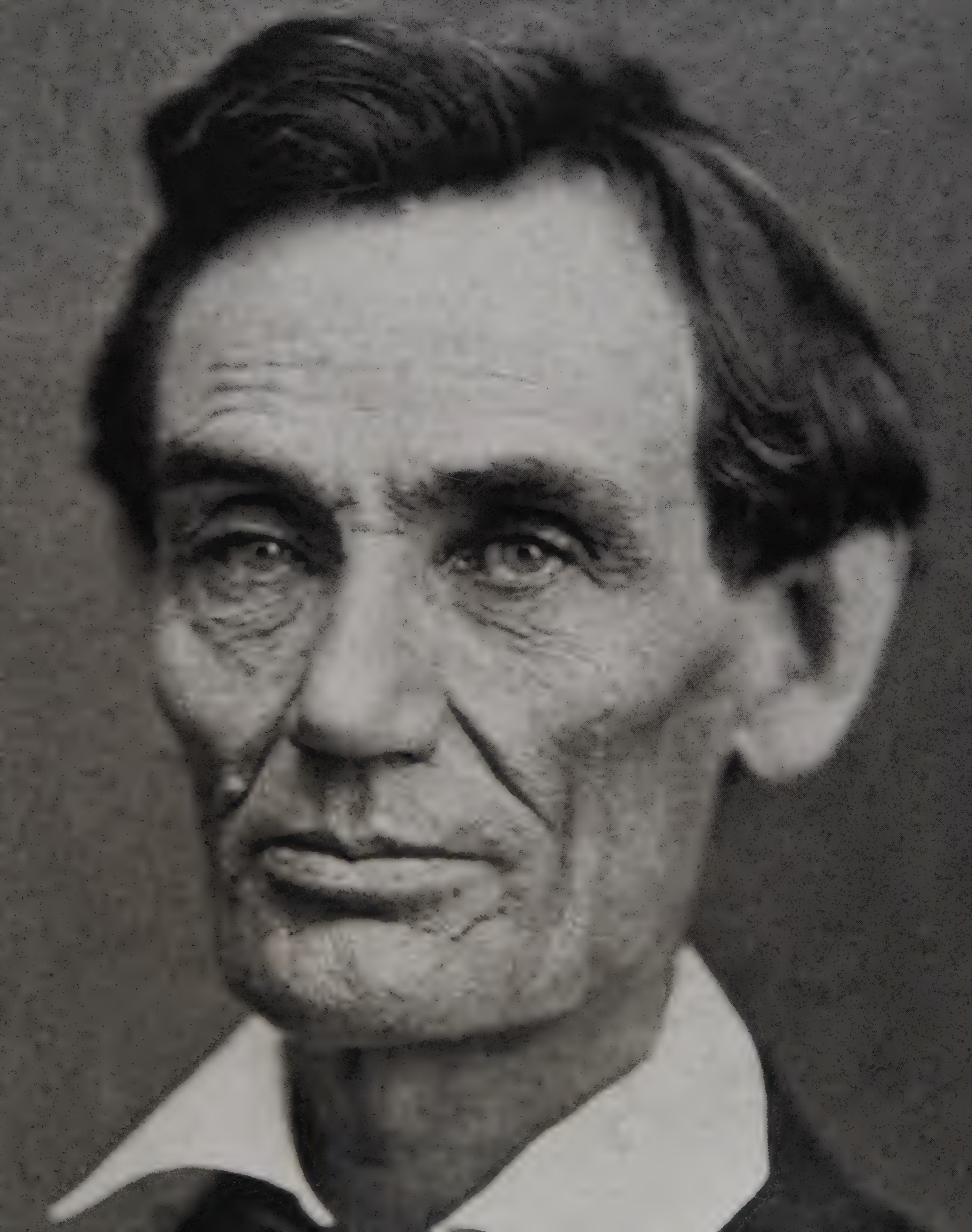




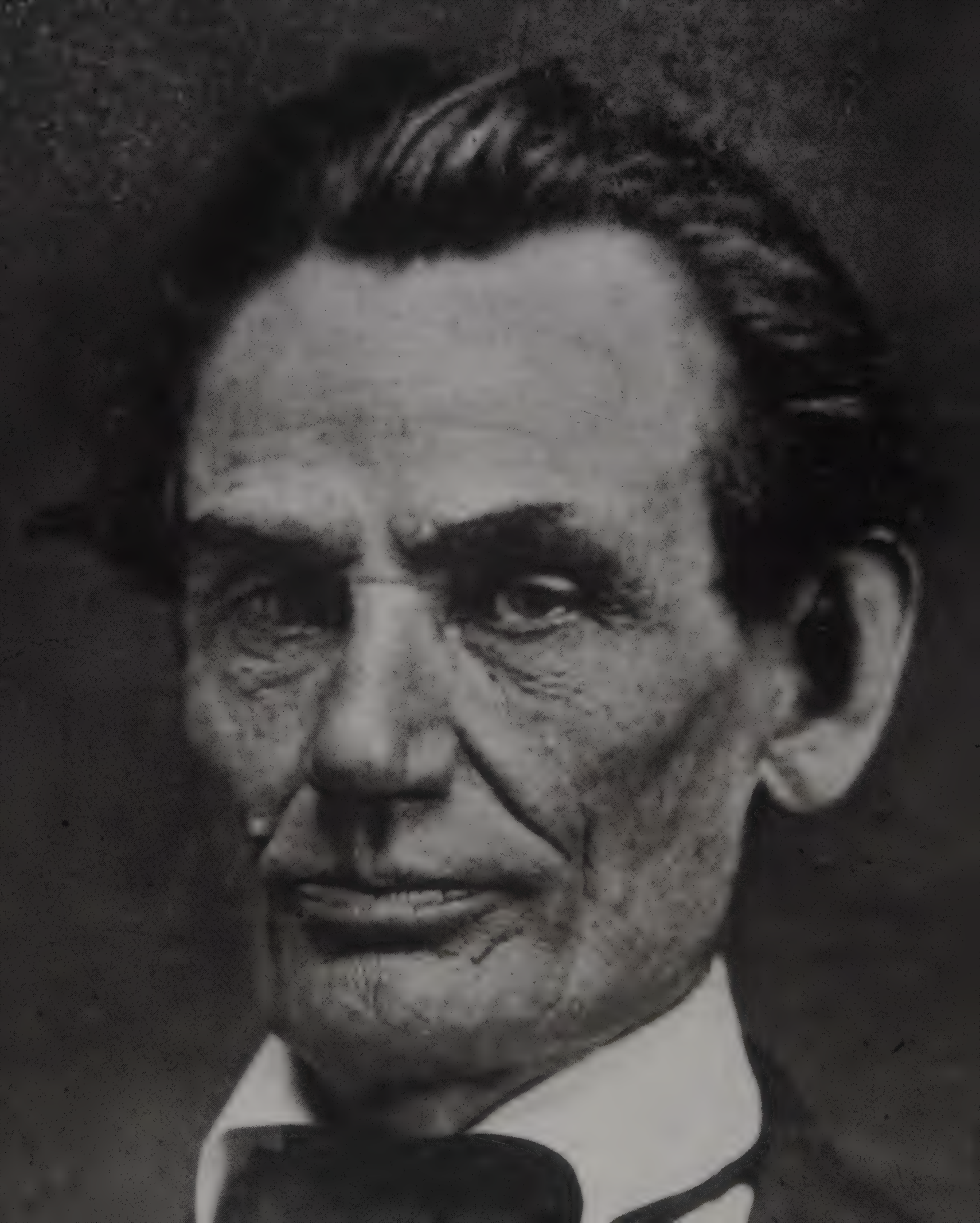




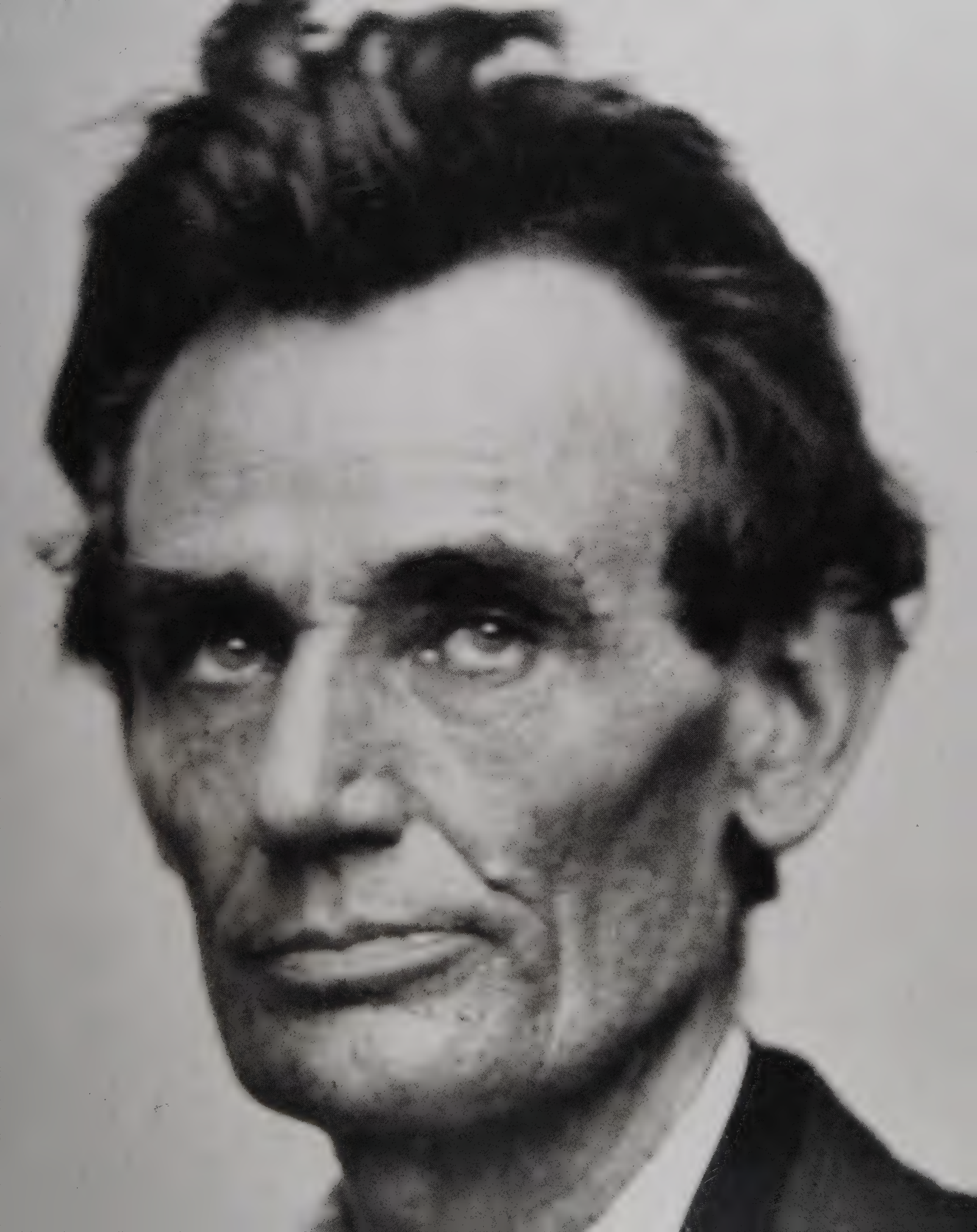




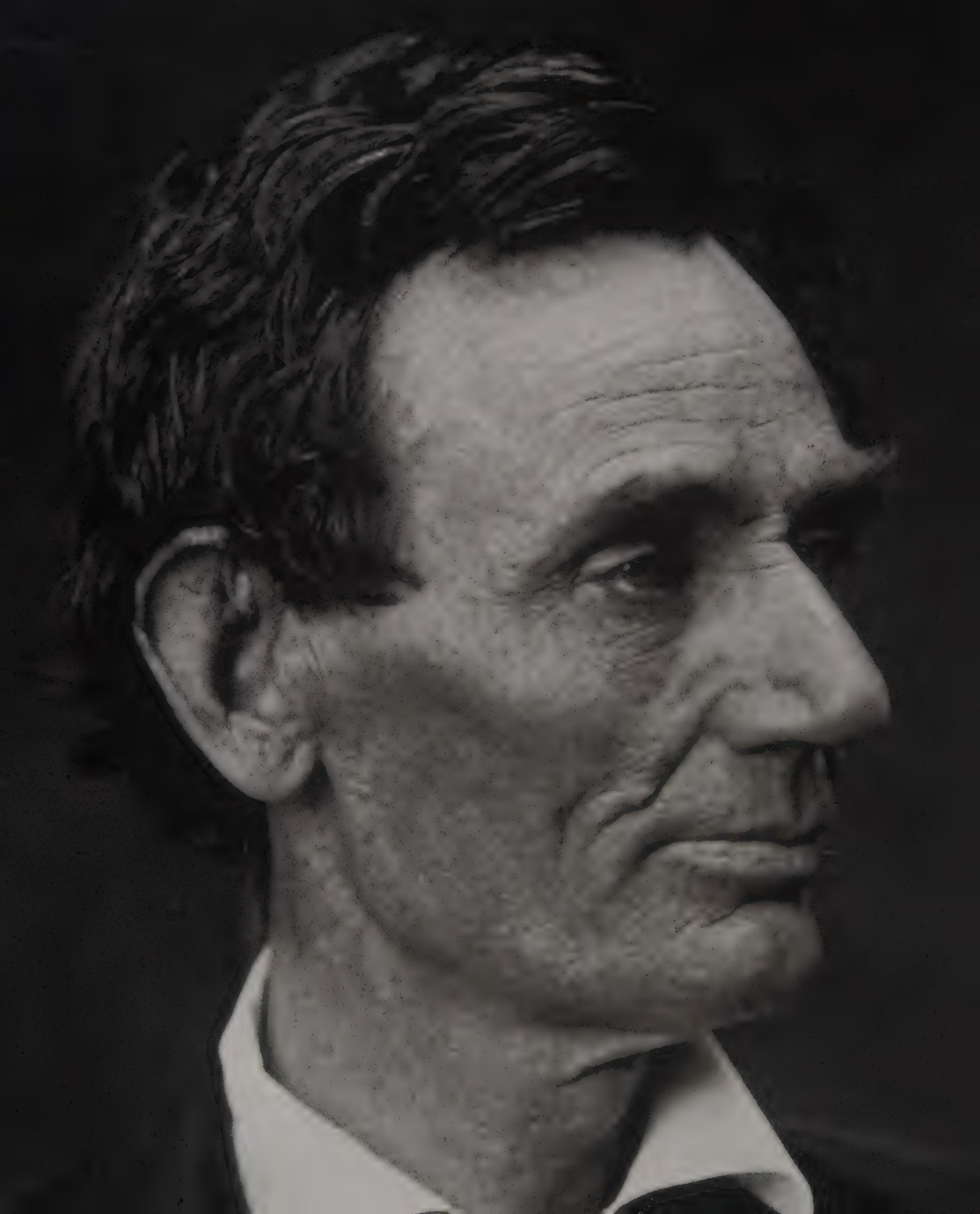




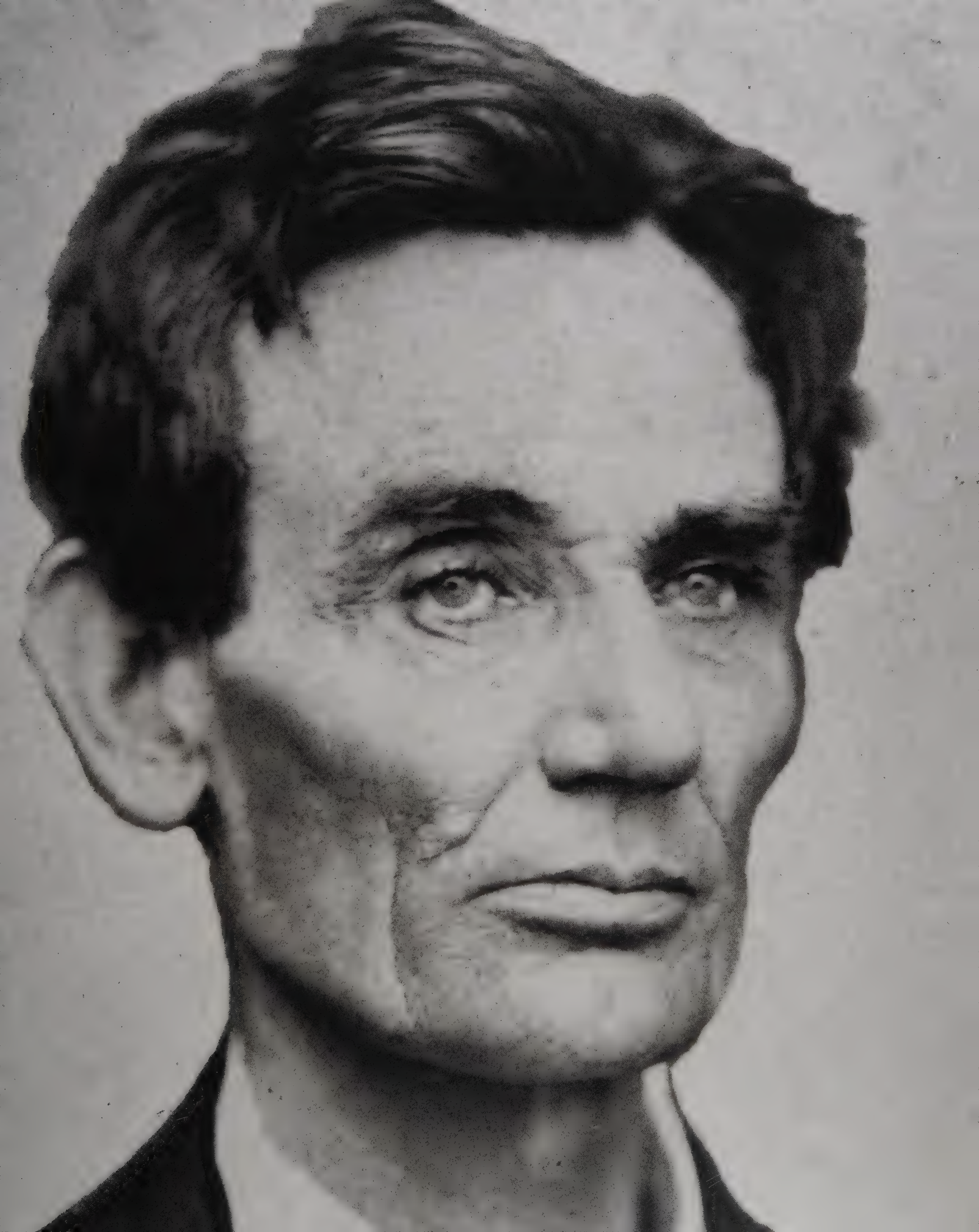




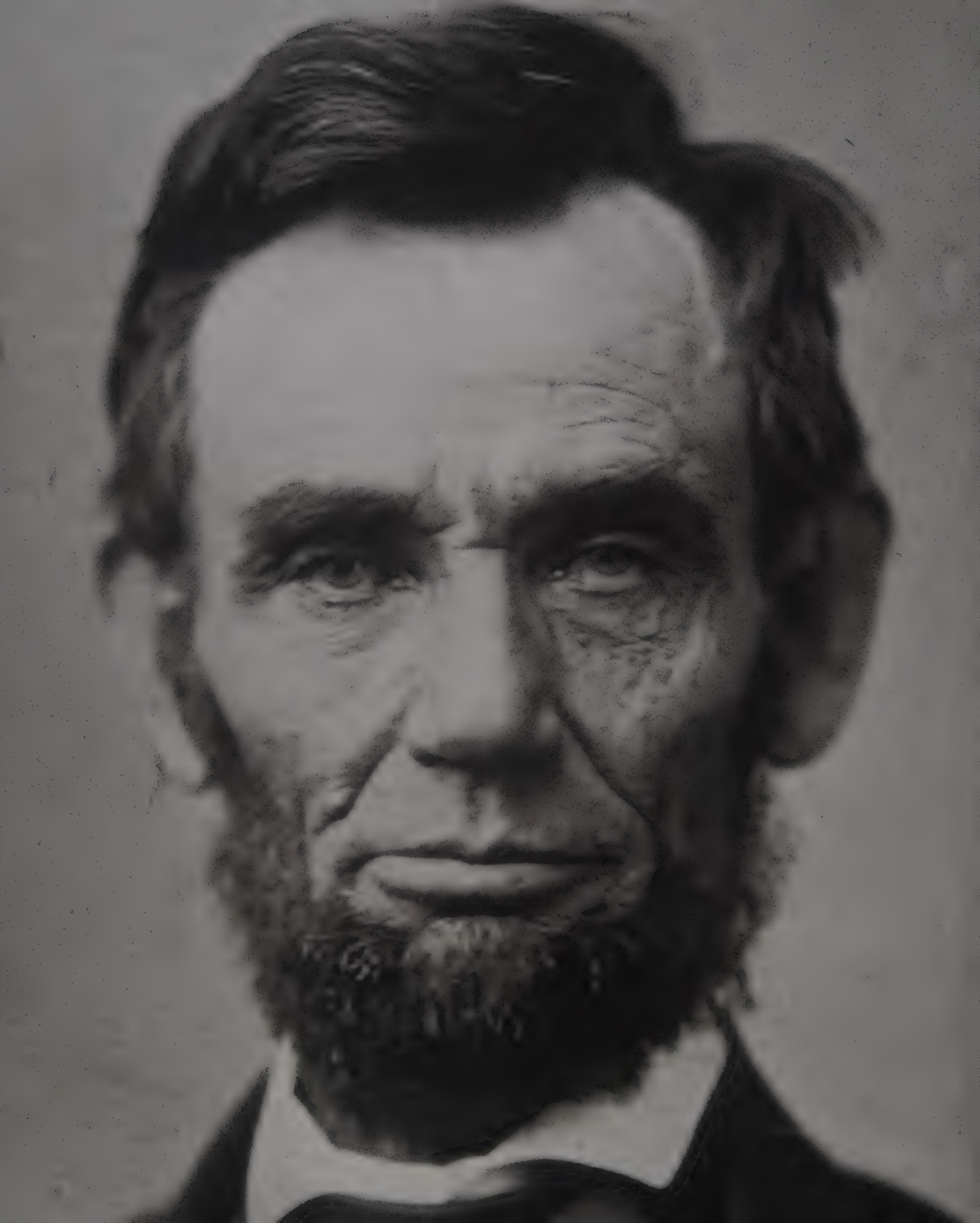




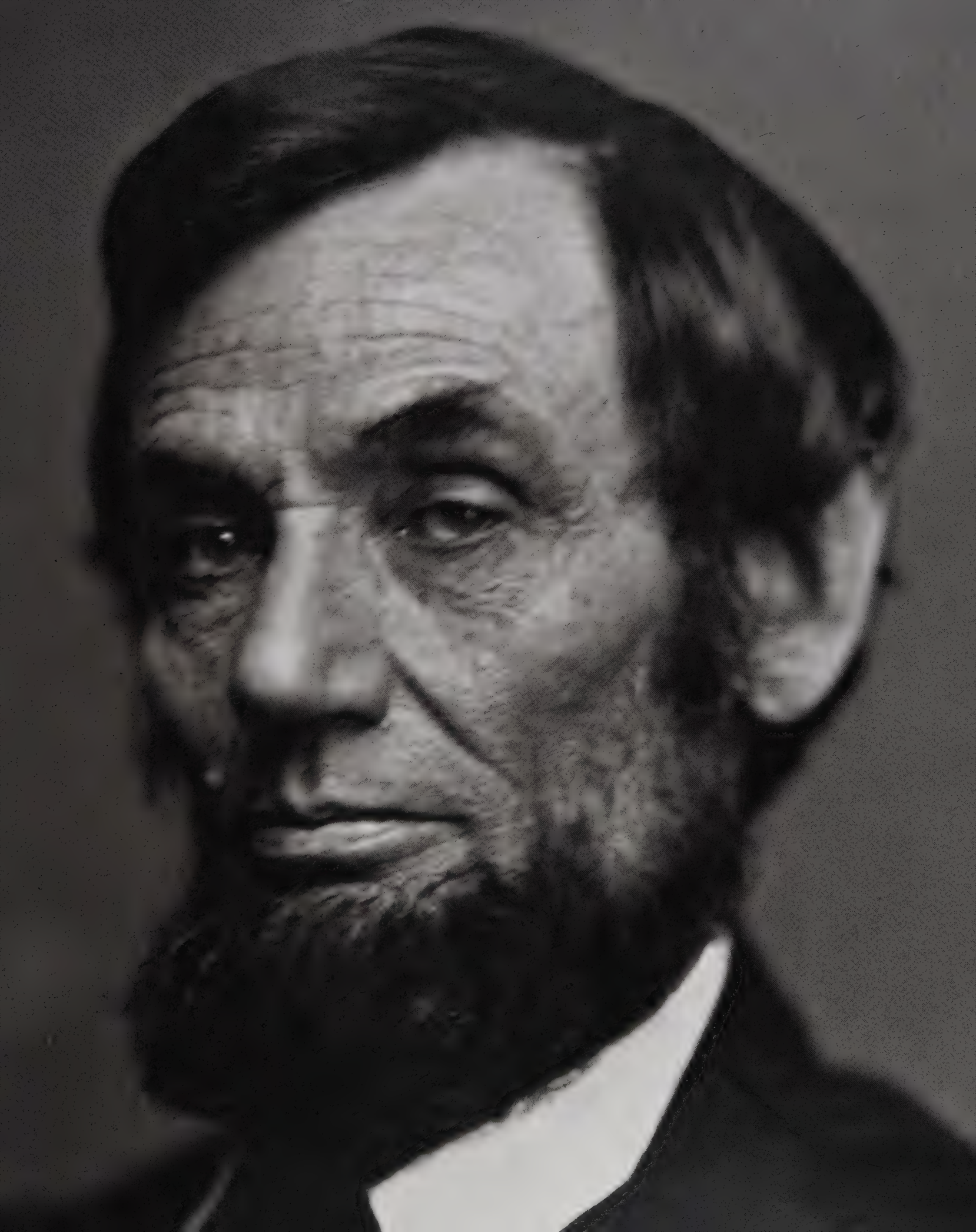








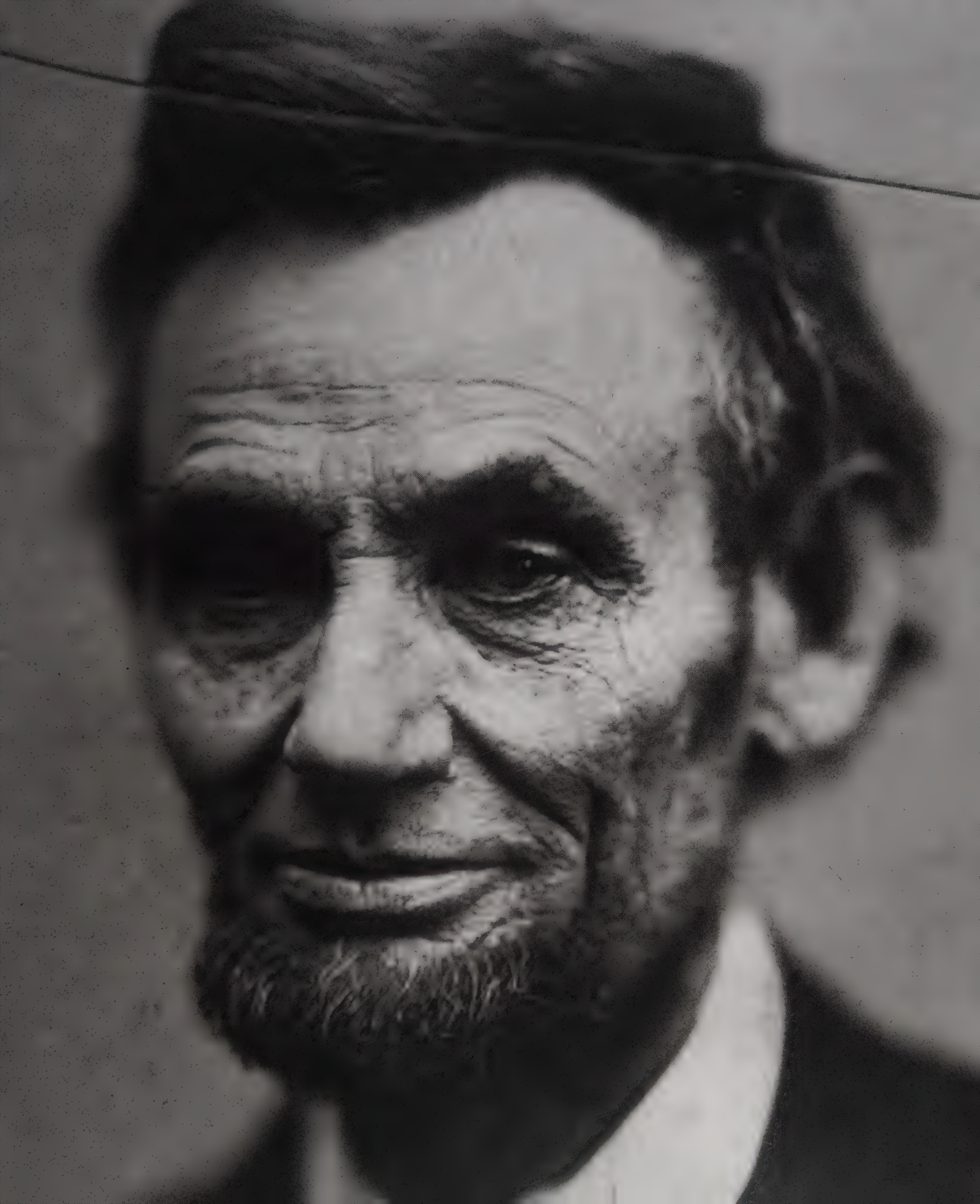


















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LINCOLN BEFORE THE CAMERAS:  
INDIFFERENT—BUT IMMORTAL—SUBJECT

Harold Holzer

On a brisk mid-autumn Chicago afternoon in 1854—only a few hours after delivering a new antislavery oration—the unusually tall figure of forty-five-year-old Abraham Lincoln could be seen strolling the Windy City’s streets alongside a local editor named George Schneider. Schneider, who was about to work a minor miracle and engineer the creation of a new photograph of the seemingly camera-shy politician, was a German-born abolitionist who edited the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, a German-language Republican newspaper. As one appreciative antislavery reader noted, the editor had begun “attacking everywhere it seemed necessary or useful” in the cause of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The two men walking along in Chicago were in a way made for each other: Schneider the editorial crusader and Lincoln the rejuvenated politician, “aroused” back into politics by passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the threat it posed that, under its terms, slavery would be permitted to spread into the West. It was Schneider who had invited Lincoln to speak out against the new federal law in Chicago this day, October 27, 1854. But getting Lincoln to deliver a ringing oration, even one that would soon be reprinted in a host of newspapers, English- and German-language alike, was not enough to satisfy the savvy editor. Schneider had yet another idea about how to immortalize Lincoln’s triumph.<sup>2</sup>

Surely not by chance, the men soon found themselves standing next door to the *Staats-Zeitung* headquarters on Lake Street, which happened to occupy space just below a photography studio run by a friend of Schneider’s, a Swede of Austrian descent who boasted the elaborate name of Johan Carl Fredrik Polycarpus von Schneidau. The photographer was no mere itinerant. He had learned his trade as an apprentice to no less a genius of the art than America’s premier photographer, Mathew Brady. Like most German-speaking immigrants, von Schneidau was also as ardent an antislavery man as Schneider and Lincoln.<sup>3</sup> Now Schneider managed to importune Lincoln upstairs to the gallery. There, the editor persuaded the man of the hour to pose for a daguerreotype, his first experience before a camera (unless intervening poses have been lost) in a shockingly long eight years.

When we examine the primitive but hypnotic result, it is difficult to choose the most striking among its startling details. Lincoln looks half asleep in the portrait—as he well might have felt after delivering his lengthy oration and then enduring a long dinner with his Chicago friends. His thick black hair stands on end at the top of his head like an untrimmed hedge, and his collar can barely contain his totemlike neck. Adding to his bizarre appearance is a bow tie that appears so ridiculously large that a viewer a century later might expect it capable of spraying water in a burlesque skit. But gripped in Lincoln’s large hands—its front page held to the camera as if in a gesture of endorsement—is what some later testified was an edition of Schneider’s newspaper. Primitive as it was, photography already served several purposes. This was not only a commemorative photograph, but also an advertisement!



Many divergent claims have since been made about the startling photograph—each of them intriguingly supported by later retouched prints based on the long-lost original daguerreotype. In one doctored ambrotype copy that dates probably to 1858, Lincoln seems to be clutching the pro-Republican *Chicago Press and Tribune* (which did not even become a Republican daily until 1855, the year *after* von Schneidau took the original). Another claim has been made that Lincoln had in fact posed for von Schneidau clutching a different Republican daily, one incongruously called the *Chicago Democrat*. In a sense, the long-standing debate about the specific journalistic prop—as important as it is in confirming Lincoln’s increasingly crucial alliance with period newspapers and newspapermen—has obscured the other relevant aspects of the story of how this photograph came to be made.

Another point worth making about the Schneider–von Schneidau episode is that until it occurred, Lincoln had avoided sitting before the cameras for years—ever since his last political triumph, his election to Congress in 1846. But now that he was engaged in a political comeback, his eyes surely on the U.S. Senate seat that the Illinois state legislature was scheduled to fill in January 1855 (he would ultimately lose that contest), Lincoln was prepared to pose once again, however modest he had always been about his appearance, however willing to make jokes about the way he looked. Long aware of the ability of newspapers to reprint his words to influence voters, he now came to the realization that a simultaneous reproduction of his image might prove just as important. Photography was in its early stages technologically—the exposure process was still so slow that Lincoln could not yet hope to be captured before the cameras actually delivering a speech—but speeches could certainly be augmented by studio sittings made around the same time.

Take note of a crucial caveat. For the rest of his storied career, even though he would be one of the most frequently photographed celebrities of his age, Lincoln would never appear to suggest at his own initiative that it was time to visit a photography gallery to sit for fresh self-promotional portraits. Evidently believing, along with most of his contemporaries, that a proper gentleman had to be invited, escorted, urged, or beseeched into the studios, Lincoln repeatedly waited until he was asked to pose for future photographs—whether in primitive prairie galleries, in the plush studios of America’s best-known camera operators, or outdoors near Antietam, where he would be the first commander in chief to pose on a battlefield with his generals. But while he may not have initiated such pictorial updates—many of which became precious to his wartime admirers, emerging as visual evidence that he was suffering as greatly as the Union’s loved and lost—Lincoln willingly allowed himself to face the cameras with even the slightest provocation. Maintaining his dignity was essential, as increasingly elegant portraits revealed. Thank goodness there were always friends, artists, and the ambitious photographers

themselves to urge Lincoln before the cameras. (“I have repeated calls every hour in the day for your Photograph,” a desperate Mathew Brady begged, to no avail, in March 1865, “and would regard it as a great favour if you would give me a sitting . . . at your earliest convenience.”<sup>4</sup>) The results of all these invitations—now reprinted so vividly, and in a definitive chronology, in this long-needed volume—did nothing less than help make Lincoln the most familiar, and beloved, of American heroes, and his the most cherished of all the nation’s representative faces.

The elaborate introductory rituals that invariably preceded photographic sittings occurred repeatedly during the 1850s, even as Lincoln gained in fame and demand for likenesses grew. Urged to sit for another Chicago photographer, Alexander Hesler, during a visit to the city on legal business in February 1857, Lincoln obliged, allowing for the creation of nothing less than a pictorial masterpiece. The result of that sitting, Lincoln later conceded, was “a very true” portrait, “though my wife, and many others, do not [agree]. My impression is that their objection arises from the disordered condition of the hair.”<sup>5</sup> Such tonsorial drawbacks hardly mattered. Three years later, the naturalistic pose seemed to exemplify the prevailing image of Lincoln the log-cabin-born rail splitter. Hesler’s tousle-haired portrait inspired countless engravings, lithographs, and textiles introducing “Honest Old Abe” to the electorate in time for the 1860 campaign for the presidency.<sup>6</sup>

Traveling through rural Vermilion County, also in 1857, Lincoln assented to yet another sitting merely when the local deputy sheriff asked for a photograph of him. And shortly before launching his bid for another Senate seat in the spring of 1858, he agreed to sit for a Jewish photographer, Samuel Alschuler, in the town of Urbana—even consenting to don Alschuler’s fancy coat for the portrait when Lincoln’s own garb struck the thoughtful photographer as too shabby to be immortalized. (Two years later, Alschuler would take the first photograph of Lincoln sporting the initial hint of whiskers.) Perhaps one of the best of Lincoln’s pre-presidential portraits, a magnificent ambrotype showing him posing rather grandly in a trim-fitting summer-white linen duster, was taken at the request of a young photographer, Abraham Byers, after the lawyer-politician had successfully defended Duff Armstrong in the celebrated “Almanac” murder trial. And so it went—even during the crowd- and publicity-generating Lincoln–Douglas debates, when it still took an invitation or recommendation to manage the candidate into a photo gallery.<sup>7</sup>

One reason Lincoln may have clung so long to his seeming indifference about photography may have to do more with his keen understanding of its early limitations than with modesty or propriety. For until the year of his election to the presidency, each of these sittings could produce only a single souvenir portrait, not a negative that could yield an indefinite number of publicly distributed prints. All that changed on February 27, 1860, when his New York City hosts urged Lincoln before Mathew Brady himself on the day



the visitor was to deliver his maiden Gotham speech at Cooper Union. The story of that sitting is perhaps the most famous among all the tales of Lincoln's experiences with photographers. Brady apparently thought that his subject, even in a newly purchased black suit, looked a bit rustic for his clientele's taste. So he moved his camera back to record not a close-up of Lincoln's craggy physiognomy or deficient wardrobe, but a head-to-knee portrait (perhaps that was as much as could fit on the plate) showcasing his subject's imposing height and powerful physique. Brady also brought in as props a pillar meant to suggest statecraft and a pile of books to signify learning. Then, at the last possible moment, the photographer suggested that Lincoln hoist up his sagging shirt collar. "Ah," joked the patient sitter, "I see you want to shorten my neck." Replied Brady, "That's just it," and as he later recalled, "We both laughed."<sup>8</sup>

Promoting Lincoln as a potential presidential candidate, however—for financial and political profit alike—was no laughing matter. It became serious business to both the photographers and their increasingly popular (and image-dependent) subject. After Lincoln secured the Republican nomination for president in May, Brady sold the rights to his original photograph to the widely read pictorial newspaper *Harper's Weekly*, where it appeared in generously retouched form later that month. Even earlier, the photographer began reproducing his own copies of the photo in response to the new craze for *cartes de visite*: small, visiting-card-size images designed to grace the wildly popular leather albums now being manufactured in quantity to house them.

Word of the so-called Cooper Union photograph's growing popularity soon reached Lincoln back in Illinois. When an admirer asked him to provide a photo as a keepsake, Lincoln was able to reply with both diffidence and confidence: "I have not a single one now at my control; but I think you can easily get one at New-York. While I was there I was taken to one of the places where they get up such things, and I suppose they got my shadow [*sic*], and can multiply copies indefinitely. Any of the Republican Club men there can show you the place."<sup>9</sup> Pointedly, Lincoln responded to an invitation to orate in Bloomington, Illinois: "I very much prefer to make no more speeches soon."<sup>10</sup> Here was a true milestone moment. After years of habit-forming political practice, the increasingly prominent national figure had reversed course and developed an altogether new and modern campaign strategy. The great orator would remain silent—but had grown eager to see his images "multiplied" and disseminated widely. Even the Chicago editor who had steered Lincoln to his photographer neighbor back in 1854 would have been astonished.

Months later, comfortably elected president, albeit by a sectional vote, Lincoln made his way to Washington for his inaugural, a victory lap tarnished only when a credible assassination threat compelled the president-elect to skirt the hostile city of Baltimore and enter the national capital secretly. Welcomed to town by an avalanche of hostile

caricatures depicting him as a shivering coward disguised in a Scottish tam and a military cloak to evade imaginary enemies, Lincoln found pictorial redemption at Brady's Washington gallery. There, on February 24, 1861, he posed passively for new *cartes de visite* that may seem inert to the modern viewer, yet undoubtedly appeared dignified enough to reassure a constituency already anxious about Southern secession, and made even more nervous by the recent reports of the president's alleged cowardice. By then, as a sculptor remarked, the "former Mr. Lincoln was no longer visible. . . . His face was transformed from mobility into an iron mask."<sup>11</sup> But ironlike solidity was just what much of the nation hoped for in early 1861. Who had arranged for this milestone sitting? Apparently *Harper's Weekly*, eager only to supply its curious readers pictorial evidence of Lincoln's fully grown whiskers.

For whatever reason he ultimately posed—to satisfy the country's biggest picture weekly or to calm fears about his lack of dignity—visiting the Brady gallery that winter Sunday (Lincoln preferred to pose on Sundays, when no other customers would be present to hound him for favors), Lincoln for the first time acknowledged the power of photography to sway hearts and minds. When his old friend Ward Hill Lamon attempted to present Lincoln to the famous photographer, the president-elect interrupted him to say he needed no such introduction: photographer and subject had already met in New York nearly a year earlier to the day. And what was more, as Lincoln declared, "Brady and the Cooper Institute made me President." Brady told and retold that story for the next thirty years.<sup>12</sup>

If Brady's Cooper Union photograph *made* Lincoln president, it may be argued that subsequent Brady poses, along with the works of others, principally Brady's onetime assistant Alexander Gardner, helped *keep* Lincoln president. Yet even this archive of Civil War-era Lincoln photographs owed a debt to third parties. Among them were painters and sculptors who routinely encountered difficulty capturing Lincoln's likeness for their own portraits and required fresh photographic models to augment life sittings. Even before he entered the White House and launched into his exhausting routine of work, head down and scribbling away at letters and documents, Lincoln proved a difficult man to pose. He blithely told one painter that if he wanted to secure his likeness, he would have to do so "while I am on the jump."<sup>13</sup> Frustrated, several artists turned to photographers to create the pictorial sources that Lincoln's unwillingness to sit still made necessary.

Alexander Hesler's exquisite pre-White House suite of June 1860 photographs, for example, may have been widely disseminated as independent campaign portraits during the presidential race. Yet they were commissioned not only by Republican leaders in Chicago but also by one of those painters encountering difficulty in Springfield: in this case the first to make the attempt, Thomas Hicks of New York. A few months later, Lincoln's final



photographs in Springfield—and the first to show him with a full beard—were accomplished in response to a similar request from the sculptor Thomas D. Jones, likewise eager for photographic models to help him past the convivial but largely unproductive life sittings he was enjoying with Lincoln at a local hotel. A wartime sculptor, Sarah Fisher Ames, was likewise rescued by a famous Alexander Gardner sitting in Washington days before the president departed for Gettysburg to deliver “a few appropriate remarks” at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. Although the magnificent studies Gardner created that day have nearly always been associated with the upcoming Gettysburg Address, they were in fact models commissioned by the sculptor to help her create a bust portrait on commission from Congress. Finally, perhaps the most extraordinary and enduring of all Lincoln’s photographic sessions, made during a February 9, 1864, visit to Brady’s gallery in Washington, produced the models for the portraits on the five-dollar bill and the copper penny, as well as the iconic image of Lincoln reading to his youngest son, Tad. But all the pictures made that day, though eventually reproduced by Brady, were originally requested by White House artist-in-residence Francis Bicknell Carpenter. The painter desired models for his own project: a monumental painting of the first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the Cabinet.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1865 brought about one more photographic revolution in which Lincoln became the principal character—and beneficiary: the introduction of spontaneous news photography of great public events, in this case of the reelected president reading his second inaugural address to thousands of spectators from the portico of the U.S. Capitol on March 4. While a photographer positioned just beneath the speakers’ platform at Gettysburg had been unable to capture a likeness during the brief two and a half minutes Lincoln spoke there in 1863, Alexander Gardner’s inaugural day photographs successfully showed Lincoln, typescript in hand, delivering what the president himself believed was the greatest of all his speeches.<sup>15</sup> A careful observer of the era might even have been able to pick out within the resulting images a number of identifiable dignitaries seated in the first row behind the president, including the newly sworn-in vice president, Andrew Johnson, and the robed members of the Supreme Court. Moreover, lurking ominously above them, wearing a stovepipe hat in almost mocking imitation of his intended victim, could be seen the famous actor John Wilkes Booth, who in fact had hoped to kill Lincoln that very day.

Notwithstanding the introduction of news photography, the very last formal poses of Abraham Lincoln, like nearly all the portraits created from 1854 on, predictably were made as a result of requests by others. Just two days after the inaugural, for instance, a tenaciously enterprising Massachusetts photographer named Henry Warren seems to have importuned Lincoln’s credulous little boy, Tad, to bring him into the White House to meet and immortalize the president. The gentle father was apparently unwilling to

disappoint—or perhaps anger—his son, who had tried to sabotage an earlier photographic session inside the Executive Mansion (conducted at Francis B. Carpenter's request) because no one had informed the eleven-year-old that a closet he claimed as private play space had been appropriated as a darkroom.<sup>16</sup> The resulting photographs created that day—the first of a president inside the White House—proved murky and indistinct, perhaps because Lincoln's office did not offer the necessary light for a good exposure, but possibly as well because Tad's indignation had ruined the plates. On the occasion of Warren's visit, Lincoln obliged by posing for him outdoors on the balcony, his face haggard and locked into an apparent grimace—perhaps squinting against a brisk March wind, or maybe reflecting his annoyance at being finagled into yet another photographic sitting by his own son.

A few weeks earlier, on February 5, 1865 (his late mother's birthday, as it happened), Lincoln had occupied a more familiar and comfortable studio setting—Alexander Gardner's gallery—for what would be his last formal photographic sitting. Much romance was long attached to this visit, perpetuated even by the great pioneer photographic historian Frederick Hill Meserve, whose descendants have preserved his legacy and produced this updated volume. For generations, Meserve and subsequent experts in the field dated the extraordinarily productive and revealing session as April 10, 1865—four days before Lincoln's assassination.<sup>17</sup> The claim added much pathos to the resulting achingly sad poses, especially the monumental, if fuzzily focused, final glass plate, which symbolically cracked in two, slightly above the head, before it could be widely printed. Was this cloudy and broken image the very last photograph of Lincoln? Alas, no. That honor would go to the improbable visitor, Henry Warren.

As it turned out, once again the Gardner session had been arranged at the request of a third party. In this case it was a New England painter named Matthew Henry Wilson, who at the time was busily working on a Lincoln painting for Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. It was only when Wilson's diary was published in a historical society journal more than a century later that the true date of and actual impetus for the final Gardner sitting could be reappraised.<sup>18</sup>

Does their private inspiration reduce the photographs' importance to history? Of course not. For whatever reason they were commissioned, the portraits reveal a Lincoln not only unexpectedly near the end of his life, but at the apex of his fame—ready for a second term, yet also wasted away by the burdens of office and, perhaps, by the agonizing sufferings of his own people. It is no wonder that the photographs served not only as models for Wilson's privately commissioned oil painting, but as publicly available collectibles as well. The widely reproduced visual records gave Lincoln's public a chance to see the haggard president, thin and aged beyond his fifty-six years, but finally allowing the hint of a smile to shine from his usually grim countenance. Was he animated that day by



wistful memories of his long-dead “angel mother,” Nancy Hanks Lincoln? Or was he perhaps imagining the prospect of the war’s successful conclusion, the Union’s preservation, and slavery’s destruction? Here in either case were truly heartbreaking examples of war’s toll on its greatest leader, soon to become even more precious when he became its last casualty.

Visiting Mathew Brady’s New York gallery ten months after Lincoln’s death, a journalist took stock of the sample photographs on view—they undoubtedly included at least one of the late president—and presciently declared: “The future historian will find in such a collection one of his most welcome helps toward the foundation of a true estimate of the leading men of our time whose characteristics are more truthfully embodied by the photographer’s art than by the best and most faithfully written contemporary descriptions.”<sup>19</sup>

Though it remains crucial—and illuminating—to understand how and why Abraham Lincoln posed for the more than six score photographs presented in this volume, the New York journalist who admired Brady’s best work was undoubtedly correct in assessing their enduring importance to historians and history. No written evidence more powerfully created the “foundation” of our estimate of Lincoln than the portraits for which he sat before the cameras of his day, reluctant as he often appeared to do so, yet uncannily aware of their potential impact.

Now, at last, here is the definitive compendium of those sittings, patiently researched over not years but generations, beautifully printed, faithfully dated, and handsomely assembled in an album that would have made Lincoln himself proud—and perhaps also, since his innate modesty was never far from the surface, somewhat surprised.

But as Carl Sandburg sagely pointed out in his introduction to Meserve’s first widely available compendium more than seventy years ago, Lincoln was truly “a new type”: not only a willing subject for the rapidly improving cameras of his era when the circumstances allowed, but an altogether unique and unendingly fascinating face as well—in retrospect, “a type foreshadowing democracy,” fully representing its possibilities, and visibly suffering for its preservation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Raymond Lohne, "Team of Friends: A New Lincoln Theory and Legacy," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 101, no. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2008), p. 296. *Staats-Zeitung* is German for "state newspaper."

<sup>2</sup> On Schneider, see John Moses, ed., *Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of the Representative Men of the United States: Illinois Volume* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1896), pp. 30–34.

<sup>3</sup> See Nils William Olsson, "Abraham Lincoln's Swedish Photographer," *Swedish American Genealogist* 24, no. 1 (March 2004), pp. 217–222, <http://www.kb.se/dokument/Aktuellt/audiovisuellt/N%C3%A5gra%20hyll%20nings%20centimeter/217-222OlssonAbrahamLincoln.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Mathew Brady to Abraham Lincoln, March 2, 1865, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress. As far as we know, Lincoln never responded to this urgent request for a pre-inaugural sitting—a lost opportunity. He lived only another six weeks, and never posed for Brady again.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Lincoln to James F. Babcock, September 13, 1860, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–1955), vol. 4, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Harold Holzer, Gabor S. Boritt, and Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Lincoln Image: Abraham Lincoln and the Popular Print* (New York: Scribner, 1984), pp. 12, 21–25.

<sup>7</sup> The best accounts of these occasions, even though they are maddeningly unsourced, can be found in Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln's Photographs: A Complete Album*, rev. ed. (Dayton, OH: Rockywood Press, 1998), esp. pp. 6–25. The book is an updated version of the volume Ostendorf published with coauthor Charles Hamilton in 1963, *Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press).

<sup>8</sup> Roy Meredith, *Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man, Mathew B. Brady* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Harvey G. Eastman, April 7, 1860, in Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Abraham Lincoln to William C. Hobbs and William H. Hanna, April 6, 1860, *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas D. Jones, quoted in Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Intimate Memories of Lincoln* (Elmira, NY: Primavera Press, 1945), p. 408.

<sup>12</sup> "Still Taking Pictures: Brady, the Grand Old Man of American Photography; Hard at Work at Sixty-Seven," *New York World*, April 12, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Lincoln in Portraiture* (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935), p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> For Hicks, see Holzer, Boritt, and Neely, *Lincoln Image*, pp. 46–49. For Jones, see Ostendorf, *Lincoln's Photographs*, p. 67. For Ames, see Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettlinger, eds., *Inside Lincoln's White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,

1997), p. 109. Hay's diary for Sunday, November 8, 1863, records that he "went with Mrs. [Sarah Fisher] Ames to Gardner's gallery & [they] were soon joined by [principal White House secretary John G.] Nico[lay] and the Prest." For Carpenter, see Francis B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln: The Story of a Picture* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> The president predicted the address would "wear as well as—perhaps better than—any thing I have produced." See Abraham Lincoln to Thurlow Weed, March 15, 1865, in Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 8, p. 356.

<sup>16</sup> Tad Lincoln locked the door to the impromptu dark-room, surrendering the key—just before the plates inside were ruined—only when his father reduced him to tears by telling him he was making him "a great deal of trouble." See Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick Hill Meserve and Carl Sandburg, *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), nos. 95–100. See also Stefan Lorant, *Lincoln: A Picture Story of His Life*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 258–259, and Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp. 391–392.

<sup>18</sup> See William J. Sims, "Matthew Henry Wilson, 1814–1892," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (October 1972), pp. 109–111.

<sup>19</sup> "Brady's Collection of War Views," *New York Evening Post*, February 23, 1866.

<sup>20</sup> Meserve and Sandburg, *Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 15.



FREDERICK HILL MESERVE  
AND THE FACE OF LINCOLN

Philip B. Kunhardt III

When I was a boy, some decades ago, my father would take my brother Peter and me to East Seventy-eighth Street in Manhattan to visit our great-grandfather Frederick Hill Meserve, who, almost unbelievably to us, had been born in 1865. We loved the steep staircase that wound its way up through his house to the fifth-floor landing, from which we could look down through an oblong stairwell all the way to the bottom. The top floor contained the old man's sanctum, devoted entirely to the Meserve Collection—filled with framed portraits, rare books, stuffed file cabinets, negative boxes, and other evidence of a lifelong study of the photographic era of Abraham Lincoln. We called him “Gampy,” and he adored my father, who beamed with pride whenever he took us to that upper room.

My great-grandfather's passion had been kindled in the late nineteenth century when he and his father commenced a joint historical project. Major William Neal Meserve had fought in the Union Army, been twice wounded at Antietam, and served under Ulysses S. Grant in the Wilderness campaign. Newly married at twenty-five, he had been stationed in Washington, D.C., at the end of the war, and was there at the time of Lincoln's murder, taking part in an all-night search for the assassins. In the 1890s, William's Civil War diaries would become the basis for his memoirs, and Frederick's job was to seek out photographs to illustrate them.<sup>1</sup>

In 1897, at the age of age thirty-one, the younger Meserve had a fateful experience. He was at Bangs auction house on lower Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, where he made a bid of \$1.10 for an unidentified package of old photographs and suddenly found himself their owner. What he had bought, he discovered, was more than a hundred salt prints in exquisite condition—photographs of leading figures from the nineteenth century: William H. Seward, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert E. Lee, and dozens of others—the prints “soft brown in color and unglazed,” he later recalled, with a “clarity and beauty . . . so evident that I was stirred.”

“That night I had my first experience of the sensation of intoxication,” he recounted, “the only kind I have ever experienced, that comes with the possession of a rare find.”<sup>2</sup> Entranced, Meserve began attending “auction after auction,” his appetite “whetted.” What had begun as a time-limited filial project mutated into an ever-growing personal quest to seek out and acquire historic American photographs.

Five years later came the turning point in Meserve's life. He knew that an important part of Mathew Brady's famous collection of nineteenth-century glass negatives had been transferred, in lieu of debt, to Brady's printers, E. & H. T. Anthony & Co. Determined to find them, he sought out the firm's successor and learned that the negatives still existed—in a warehouse in Jersey City, New Jersey. He discovered them in an upstairs room, lying in heaps, covered with dust, some of them broken. Summoning his courage, he made the highest offer he dared on the entire lot. Of the ten thousand or more Brady glass negatives he acquired that day, seven, it turned out, were life negatives of Abraham Lincoln.



The negatives became the heart of the Meserve Collection, and my great-grandfather would spend the next sixty years studying them, late into each night, a task “so thrilling,” he wrote, “it was hard to turn off the light.” In addition, scarcely a day went by without a new acquisition. He bought hundreds of Alexander Gardner war photographs—original albumen prints of Civil War scenes and portraits. From dealers he scooped up as many as a thousand *cartes de visite* at a time. In a single exhilarating purchase he obtained 75,000 cabinet photographs. He plundered newspaper morgues and acquired original photographs from magazines, including *Harper’s Weekly*, one of the richest sources of nineteenth-century illustration. A mild-mannered textile executive by day, Meserve became an impassioned photo historian by night, his collection ultimately growing to more than 200,000 images. His friend the Lincoln scholar and author Carl Sandburg wrote that Meserve lived a “double life,” and came to refer to him as “the Zealot.”<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-1890s, Meserve had become excited by a new Lincoln biography by the progressive journalist Ida Tarbell, being published serially in *McClure’s Magazine* in advance of a four-volume trade edition. Unlike any earlier treatment, Tarbell’s was filled with a cascade of illustrations and pictorial evidence and had a stated goal of publishing every known Lincoln photographic portrait. She eventually ferreted out and presented fifty of them, including a never-before-published daguerreotype, the earliest known of Lincoln, which she had obtained by repeatedly cajoling the sixteenth president’s oldest son, Robert.<sup>4</sup> Meserve began a correspondence with Tarbell that would turn into a warm and productive collaboration. And he responded to requests from the photography scholar Francis Trevelyan Miller, who was planning his own *Portrait Life of Lincoln*. When it came out in 1910, it contained fifty-seven Lincoln photographs, ten of which Miller acknowledged having received from Meserve.<sup>5</sup>

In 1911, after more than a decade of research, my great-grandfather brought forth his own first book, a chronological display of the photographs of Abraham Lincoln, in a hand-produced, privately printed edition of 102 copies. Containing exactly one hundred portraits, it doubled the number previously published by Tarbell and had forty-three images unknown to Miller. And it established Meserve as the leading authority in the field. Heartened by scholarly interest in his book, Meserve launched an ambitious new project. Doing the photo cutting, tipping in, and labeling all by hand, he produced a twenty-eight-volume set of books titled *Historical Portraits and Lincolniana*, which featured nearly 8,000 nineteenth-century photographic portraits of people he had painstakingly identified, many of them contemporaries of Lincoln. It was a true encyclopedia of nineteenth-century American faces; nothing like it had ever been attempted in American publishing. As repeated requests for a copy of the massive work came in, he undertook the task of replicating it—seven times—each set taking him an entire year to produce.<sup>6</sup>

Meserve's crowning moment as an author came in 1944. In conjunction with Harcourt, Brace & Company and his now coauthor Carl Sandburg, he published an updated and revised expansion of the 1911 book, once again titled *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, but this time mass-produced for wide circulation. Now containing 120 portraits of Lincoln, it appeared to be the last word on the subject. The acclaimed Columbia University historian Allan Nevins wrote in review, "Until Mr. Meserve's work we had only the most partial knowledge of the lineaments of Lincoln. Generations after generations of future historians and biographers will look back on his work gratefully."<sup>7</sup>

Over the years Meserve offered collegial advice and assistance to Lincoln sculptors and artists, including Victor Brenner, working on the head of the Lincoln penny; Daniel Chester French, sculpting the seated Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial; and Gutzon Borglum, designing and carving Mount Rushmore. Speaking of his experiences with these and the many others artists who sought his help, Meserve wrote simply, "I visited them in their studios and entered into their dreams." By the 1950s he was the grand old man of American photography—his images gracing the pages of textbooks and biographies and his advice offered freely to scholars and researchers around the world.<sup>8</sup>

\*

I remember my father teaching me as a boy that you can't judge people by their faces. Getting to know them is what matters—and that takes time and being with individuals in a variety of situations. While this has proved to be extremely good advice, it is also true that over time the external contours of a person's face can come to reflect at least some of what is inside. Lincoln himself believed this, and his own evolving face stands in evidence.

Biographers of Lincoln have paid special attention to his earliest known photograph—a circa 1846 daguerreotype of the thirty-seven-year-old congressman-elect, taken in Springfield by Nicholas H. Shepherd sometime before Lincoln's move to Washington, D.C.—the portrait Ida Tarbell introduced to the world. Part of a pair of photographs taken with his young wife, Mary Todd, the unique image on silvered copper shows the young Lincoln four years after the nearly fatal emotional crisis that followed his broken engagement to her. A yearlong struggle with self-loathing and despair had become a transformative passage in Lincoln's life, forcing him to confront the meaning of his word and his ability to keep it. It was a virtue he had once considered the "gem" of his character; he had lost that treasure and would be unable to trust himself in any serious matter until he regained it. It was time to face up to his deepest fears. And he did, in part by making a solemn vow to himself. In this first photograph, taken with the crisis now safely behind him, he appears calm and hopeful, a professional man in the process of rising in the world and aware of it.<sup>9</sup>



(It is important to remember that daguerreotypes, like ambrotypes, offered a mirror image of their subjects and must be reversed in order to see the faces as others did. A raised mole on Lincoln's right cheek, diagonally above the upper lip, identifies his portrait as correctly oriented if it is on the left side of the photograph.)

Lincoln was a person of slow but steady transformation, a cautious, pragmatic, yet idealistic politician. Over the period from his first portrait in 1846 to his last in 1865—a mere nineteen years, but a universe apart in historical time—he grew from a Henry Clay Whig, opposing an aggressive war with Mexico, into the leading antislavery voice in American politics, and ultimately into a statesman forced to preside over either the death or the rebirth of the nation. This evolution is visible in the Lincoln photographic portraits.

Many of us, when we look into a person's face, tend to overregister the right side (the left side in a photographic portrait). Cover the right side of a photograph and the impact of the face remains much the same. But especially in cases like Lincoln's, where there was a pronounced facial asymmetry, if you cover the left side of the photograph and look again, the impact can be startlingly different. Whereas the right side of Lincoln's face (again, the left in the picture) is usually calm and neutral, with a receptive, gentle, even dreamy and poetic look, the left side of his face (the right in the photo) almost always looks alert, at times almost fierce. That left eye sometimes glares out at you like that of an eagle and, except when tired, can appear angry and even dangerous. This side of Lincoln's face seemed to age more quickly than the other, and could also sometimes look sadder. A person meeting Lincoln face-to-face would, without even realizing it, be confronted by two Lincolns, one dreamy and inviting, the other earnest and watchful.<sup>10</sup>

The asymmetry of Lincoln's face is visible in many of the thirty-nine beardless photographs from the 1850s and 1860, and in the seventy-four bearded ones from late 1860 to 1865. (We suggest that readers examine this for themselves in such images as AL.1858.4, AL.1859.1, AL.1863.4, and AL.1864.2B.)<sup>11</sup> An unusual but particularly striking example of this dimorphism can be seen in an image taken by Alexander Gardner in 1863. Gardner had broken ties the previous year with his employer, Mathew Brady, and after finishing an important job as "Photographer to the Army of the Potomac" had opened his own shop in Washington. President Lincoln, who had gotten to know and like him as Brady's operative and in his workshop for the army on the grounds of the White House, promised to become one of Gardner's first customers.<sup>12</sup> On November 8, soon before the president's trip to Gettysburg to deliver his address, Gardner captured one of the finest portraits ever taken of him (AL.1863.2B). In contrast to many of Lincoln's poses, where he looked slightly off into the distance, here his gaze was straight into the camera's eye. When we take in the image, the principal impact is from the strong, clear right side of Lincoln's face (the left side of the photo)—including his calm, receptive right eye. Cover up his left side (the right side of

the photograph) and the impact changes little. But a viewer of the whole face subliminally takes in that less noticed other side as well, with its once fierce, now exhausted, upward-drifting left eye, its mottled skin, and its sagging cheek, a face that must have originally appeared to be almost dissolving, as if battered by war's hatred and the seemingly impossible pathway to national renewal. This difficult side adds an eerie depth, and the combined result is of a gaze of confidence and strength mingled with a painful knowledge of human tragedy. If we flip the image, so that Lincoln's face looks as it did to him in a mirror but not to others, the effect is strangely different. Suddenly the two sides of Lincoln's face appear to fight each other. And the face as a whole seems peculiar, even fearful.

In his 1911 book, Meserve's culminating photograph in the series, which he proudly displayed as "Lincoln 100," was an unknown portrait he had acquired seven years earlier from his old MIT sculpture and drawing professor, a fellow Lincoln authority, Truman H. Bartlett. Bartlett had bought it in 1874 from Alexander Gardner himself, who had told him how the imperial-size glass negative had been broken in processing and how he had pieced it together to make a single large print before discarding the glass. It was the final picture in a series of five taken the same day—an evocative close-up of Lincoln's face, emerging into the focal plane as if out of a fog.<sup>13</sup> Gardner may well have considered the image a failure, as he had never reproduced it except in a painted-over form; despite his great gift as a portraitist, he had missed its historical and artistic significance. Bartlett bought several other prints from Gardner that day—all from the same historic sitting—including one that showed Lincoln with a wonderful and rare smile. (Photographs in those days, requiring long exposure times, usually made such expressions impossible to catch.) And the now fifty-three-year-old photographer had provided Bartlett with a date for the session—"on or around April 10, 1865."<sup>14</sup> Bartlett passed this dating on to Ida Tarbell in 1896, and one of the images in her book, drawn from this series, was labeled "the last portrait of Abraham Lincoln, taken April 9, 1865."<sup>15</sup> For these reasons and more, when Meserve became the lucky owner of the Gardner images, he believed that the entire group of photographs (among them a portrait of the president with his youngest son, Tad) had been taken in the final days of Lincoln's life. All of the prints, including the one with the marvelous smile, appeared to radiate Lincoln's great relief at the approaching end of the war. And Meserve's favorite, "Lincoln 100," with its eerie crack across the head, which he finally unveiled to the world in 1911, seemed to portend the assassination itself, occurring just days after the photograph had presumably been taken. It all became a part of the growing Lincoln mythology, and remained unquestioned by historians for more than sixty years.<sup>16</sup>

But as Harold Holzer writes in his excellent essay in this volume, the Gardner/Bartlett/Meserve dating of these photographs has been disproved. A nineteenth-century diary first published in 1972 in *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* offered vital new



evidence. As Holzer notes, the diarist was the portrait painter Matthew Wilson, who recorded being present at the Gardner photo session with Lincoln and Tad on February 5, part of his preparation for a new painting of the sixteenth president. Using photographs supplied to him by Alexander Gardner after the session, Wilson began working on his portrait two days later, his diary revealed, and completed a version of it in less than two weeks. It became the prototype for numerous copies of the painted portrait, which all looked a lot like the smiling Lincoln. (Until 1972 it was believed that Wilson's Lincoln portrait was completed not in February but in April, after a final live sitting, when subsequent versions of it indeed were.) What Holzer doesn't say is that he was the first scholar to realize what this meant to the traditional dating of Gardner's now legendary "final portraits," including the revered "cracked Lincoln" (the original print of which is today owned by the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.). As he recognized as early as 1974, those extraordinary Gardner photographs did not come at the very end of Lincoln's life at all, but two and a half months earlier, and weeks before his second inauguration.<sup>17</sup> And so, the huge relief visible in Lincoln's smiling face—those warm eyes, that cocked-back head, that emanating happiness, and for lack of a better word, that grandeur—all must be explained by something else.

In the 1864 presidential campaign, Lincoln had turned his attention to the future. Knowing that the Emancipation Proclamation was a wartime measure that might easily be revoked by a future administration, he came to see that the only sure and permanent solution to slavery was a constitutional amendment abolishing it forever. For some time, as others advocated this, he had remained silent on the issue, and although a version of the amendment passed in the Senate, it was defeated in the House in mid-1864. But in early June of that year, Lincoln met with New York senator Edwin Morgan, the new chair of the National Union Executive Committee, and directed him to make the antislavery amendment the "key note" of his opening speech at the upcoming party convention in Baltimore. On June 7, Morgan complied, and before enthusiastic delegates announced the central plank of the Union Party's platform, advocating "utter and complete extirpation of slavery" by constitutional amendment.<sup>18</sup> Two days later, in an official acceptance of his renomination by the convention, Lincoln publicly embraced the Thirteenth Amendment for the first time, calling it "a fitting, and necessary conclusion" to the Civil War.<sup>19</sup>

But by late summer, as the election grew closer, a nation sickened by bloodshed increasingly looked as if it might not be willing to reelect Lincoln. Blaming the interminable war on the president's fixation with ending slavery, many in his own party urged him to drop support for the amendment, and renege as well on the Emancipation Proclamation. To both requests Lincoln refused. "I should be damned in time & in eternity for so doing," he told a delegation of visiting Republicans in late August. "The world shall know that I will keep my faith to friends & enemies, come what will." In the estimate of the Civil

War historian James McPherson, it was in many ways Lincoln's "finest hour."<sup>20</sup> And then in September the course of the war changed abruptly, with decisive Union victories in the South. And when Lincoln went on to win in the November election and felt the people had spoken, he claimed a public mandate to aggressively pursue the amendment.<sup>21</sup> Over the course of the winter of 1864–1865, he used all the presidential power at his disposal to line up the necessary support in Congress. And in a dramatic vote on January 31, 1865, the historic amendment finally passed in the House of Representatives. As a measure it owed much to many others—to a vast network of fellow Republicans, and to abolitionists and reformers who had been advocating for it for years. But President Lincoln now boldly endorsed it as his own, and though not legally required to, he affixed his signature in full to the printed amendment. To a delegation outside the White House on the following night he said, "The occasion is one of congratulation," and he "could not but congratulate all present," himself, "the country, and the whole world upon this great moral victory."<sup>22</sup>

When we look at the Gardner photographs taken (we now know) just four days later, it is hard not to see a changed Lincoln. The ravages of time remain on his face, but are somehow transfigured. The two sides of the face, once so disparate and at odds, have come together now in a powerful new harmony—the right side no longer merely calm but wide awake, still soft and open but now exultant and joyful, the normally more aggressive left side having relinquished its former ferocity in return for a kindly if exhausted look of gratefulness. Even the long exposure time of the photographs could not extinguish the joyous smile. Lincoln's face reveals a psyche that has reached a new wholeness.

Perhaps something else accounted for all this—a safe return home from the Hampton Roads peace conference two days before; even a happy joke told in the studio, bringing needed humor. But we think the face itself had changed. The journey of the American Civil War is written in this face—a fratricidal conflict that under Lincoln's leadership became a war to end slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation would be the great accomplishment of his life, he had said to his close friend Joshua Speed in 1862. It would fulfill a promise that went back all the way to the end of his crisis, in 1842, when he had finally recovered faith in himself and vowed to keep on living until he had made a true imprint on history.<sup>23</sup> But if the Proclamation had realized his "fondest hope," the Thirteenth Amendment had become something more—"a King's cure for all the evils," Lincoln said. By it, the awful war itself had been redeemed.<sup>24</sup>

For those of us who read much into photographic portraits, it is encouraging to learn that Lincoln, too, put great stock in people's faces. The Philadelphia businessman Thomas B. Bancroft once witnessed the president receiving a visitor at the White House who had come with some kind of dubious written proposal. The man sat in a chair in front of Lincoln and "seemed, by his restlessness and his unsteady eyes, to be of a nervous



disposition, or under great excitement,” Bancroft recalled. “Mr. Lincoln, still holding the paper up and without movement of any kind, paused and, raising his eyes, looked for a long time at this man’s face and seemed to be looking down into his very soul. . . . Suddenly, without warning, he dropped the paper and stretching out his long arm he pointed his finger directly in the face of his [visitor] and said, ‘What’s the matter with you?’ The man stammered and finally replied, ‘Nothing.’ ‘Yes, there is,’ said Lincoln. ‘You can’t look me in the face! You have not looked me in the face since you sat there! Even now you are looking out that window and cannot look me in the eye!’ Then, flinging the paper in the man’s lap, he cried, ‘Take it back! There is something wrong about this! I will have nothing to do with it!’—and the discomfited individual retired.”<sup>25</sup>

Frederick Hill Meserve believed that much could be learned by peering into the images of people’s faces, and he labored a long lifetime at the task. He never considered his gargantuan efforts studying historic photographs to be work, however, but rather his “play time”—his life’s passion, his true vocation, and in the end, his exaltation. He was a man enraptured by faces from the past, once writing that he felt “surrounded by a host of companions . . . men and women I have only known through their faces upon photographs, but into whose lives I have been drawn.”<sup>26</sup> Through this one man’s life, my brother Peter and I have felt, ever since we were boys, that we, too, have been drawn forth, and could reach our hands back into the nineteenth century, and almost touch Lincoln. And now, with Peter Jr., who has spearheaded and overseen this new book and brought us together with the incomparable publisher Gerhard Steidl, we hope, in the spirit of our honored forebear, to reach a new generation of readers and share our fascination with Abraham Lincoln.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For William Neal Meserve’s memoirs, see Richard Alden Huebner, ed., *Meserve Civil War Record* (Oak Park, MI: RAH Publications, 1987). For an overview of Frederick Meserve’s life, see Frederick Hill Meserve, “My Experience in Collecting Historical Photographs,” *Lincoln Herald* 56, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 1954), pp. 2–20, 30. This article was reprinted as a limited-edition pamphlet (Harrowgate, TN: Lincoln Memorial University Press, 1954); subsequent citations in these notes refer to the pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup> Meserve, “My Experience in Collecting Historical Photographs,” p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt, Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., and the editors of Time-Life Books, *Mathew Brady and His World* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1977), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> See Ida Tarbell, “Abraham Lincoln: Editorial Announcement,” *McClure’s Magazine* 5, no. 6 (November 1895), pp. 1–2, frontispiece.

<sup>5</sup> See Francis Trevelyan Miller, *Portrait Life of Lincoln: Life of Abraham Lincoln, the Greatest American* (Springfield, MA, and New York: Patriot Publishing, 1910).

<sup>6</sup> See Josephine Cobb, “Frederick Hill Meserve,” in *Picturescope* 10, no. 4 (December 1962), p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in “Frederick Hill Meserve Dies; Lincolniana Collector Was 96,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1962, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Meserve, “My Experience in Collecting Historical Photographs,” p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> For Lincoln’s personal crisis of 1841–1842, see Douglas L. Wilson, *Honor’s Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), pp. 195–292.

<sup>10</sup> For a reference to the asymmetry of Lincoln’s face, see “Reading Lincoln’s Face,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 2007, p. A20.

<sup>11</sup> Different compilers of photographs of Lincoln’s face have

arrived at different totals, depending on whether they count slight variants (due to the use of multiple lenses), silhouetted duplicates, questionable images, and so on. Our count of 114 portraits differs in numerous ways from Meserve's final count of 120 and Lloyd Ostendorf's of 130 (closely followed by Lincoln collector Keya Morgan). See note 27 for references and for an explanation of AL numbers.

<sup>12</sup> On Gardner's career, see Josephine Cobb, "Mathew Brady's Photographic Gallery in Washington," reprint from *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 53–56 (1953–1956), pp. 12–29. See also D. Mark Katz, *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner: The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West* (New York: Viking, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> See Frederick Hill Meserve and Carl Sandburg, *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), caption to plate 100. A printed identification plate by Meserve (now in the Meserve-Kunhardt Collection) gives 1904 as the date of his acquisition of the Gardner prints from Bartlett.

<sup>14</sup> See James Mellon, *The Face of Lincoln* (New York: Viking, 1979), p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> Ida Tarbell, "The Death of Abraham Lincoln," *McClure's Magazine* 13, no. 4 (August 1899), p. 377. See Truman H. Bartlett to Ida Tarbell, July 12, 1911, with reference to their long working relationship, found at <https://dspace.allegheeny.edu/handle/10456/26882>. The Allegheny College library owns several letters between these two figures, demonstrating Bartlett's role as a photographic advisor to Tarbell.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., *Twenty Days: A Narrative in Text and Pictures of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the Twenty Days and Nights That Followed—The Nation in Mourning, the Long Trip Home to Springfield* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 11. Gardner's smiling Lincoln (Meserve 98, AL.1865.1D) also appeared on the book jacket. The authors were a daughter and a grandson of Frederick Hill Meserve. Though the smiling Lincoln photograph was first published by Meserve in 1911, a copy of it obtained from Gardner had been sent by Mary Todd Lincoln in later 1865 to the artist Francis B. Carpenter to aid in his painting of a Lincoln family portrait. See Mark E. Neely and Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln Family Album* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 100.

<sup>17</sup> For a transcription of Wilson's diary, see William J. Sims, "Matthew Henry Wilson, 1814–1892," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (October 1972), pp. 109–111. Also see Harold Holzer, "Some Contemporary Paintings of Abraham Lincoln," *The Magazine Antiques* 107, no. 2 (February 1975), pp. 314–322. Gardner's successor Moses P. Rice, who in 1891 copyrighted an image from the last sitting, also helped spread the incorrect date for it. James Mellon, examining the question of the dating, decided in 1979 that it could not "yet be determined with certainty," and wrote that the photographs had been taken sometime between early February and early

April 1865. See his notes on the images on page 201 of *The Face of Lincoln*.

<sup>18</sup> See Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), p. 299.

<sup>19</sup> See Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953–1955), vol. 7, p. 380.

<sup>20</sup> For Lincoln's words, see *ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 506–508. See also James McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 139, no. 1 (March 1995), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> See Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 8, pp. 149–152.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup> See Joshua Speed to William H. Herndon, February 7, 1866, in Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements About Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 197.

<sup>24</sup> Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 8, p. 254.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas B. Bancroft, "An Audience with the President," *McClure's Magazine* 32, no. 4 (February 1909), p. 448.

<sup>26</sup> Meserve, "My Experience in Collecting Historical Photographs," p. 22.

<sup>27</sup> For more information about Lincoln photographs and Frederick Hill Meserve, see Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), and two books by Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., *Looking for Lincoln: The Making of an American Icon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008) and *Lincoln, Life-Size* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009). *Looking for Lincoln* presented a new Lincoln photographic numbering system, followed also in this volume. For further discussion of the dating controversy of Alexander Gardner's "last Lincoln sitting," see Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln Photographs: A Complete Album*, rev. ed. (Dayton, OH: Rockywood Press, 1998), p. 218, and Errol Morris, "The Interminable, Everlasting Lincolns," *The New York Times*, December 2, 2013, available online and including an interview with Harold Holzer. Ostendorf, who worked closely with and dedicated his book to Frederick Hill Meserve, and whose 1963 edition (*Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose*, cowritten with Charles Hamilton) followed the Meserve dating for these images, made the point in 1998 that *cartes de visite* of one of the Gardner last portraits were published before April 1865.





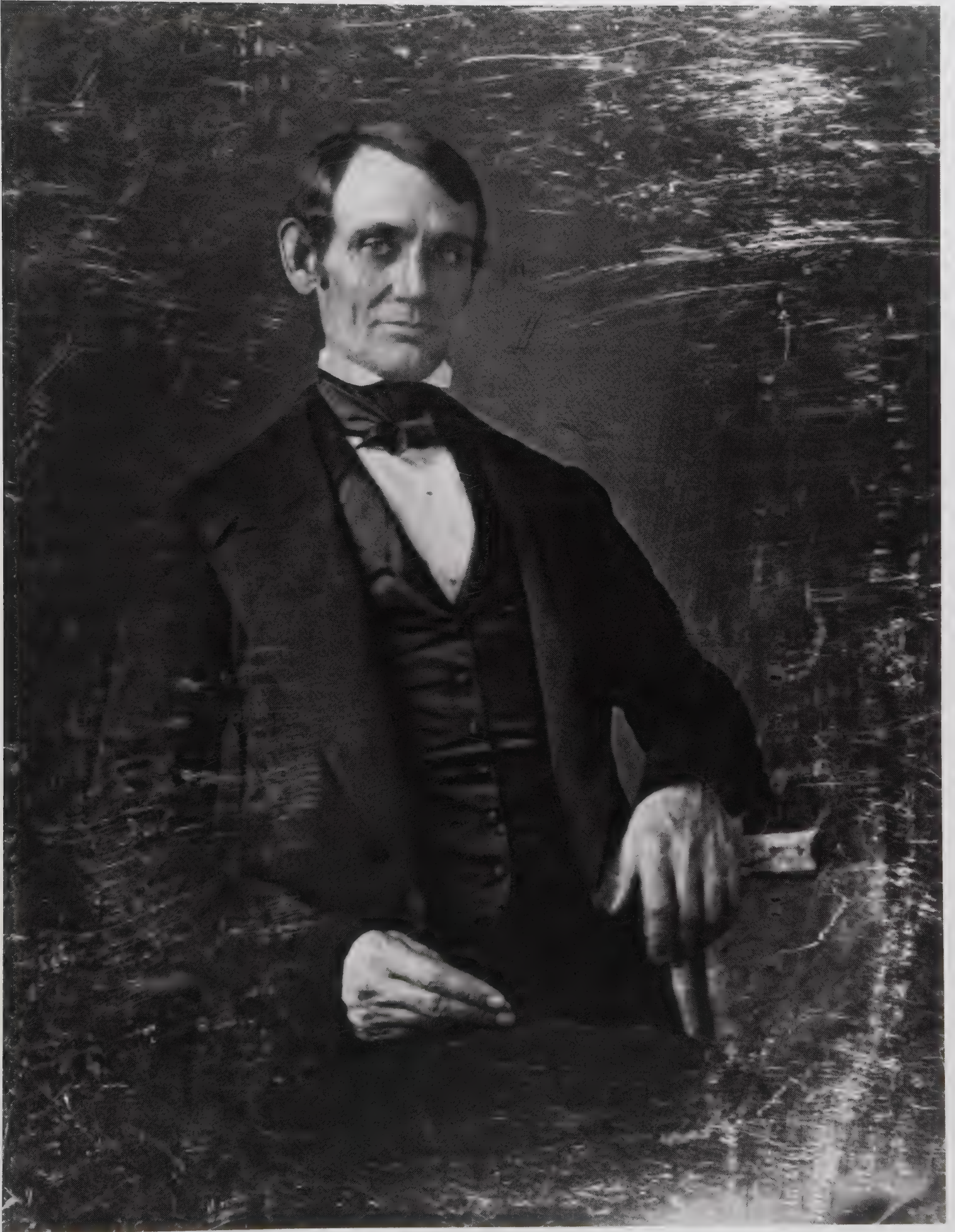
## PLATES



PROBABLY 1846  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Nicholas H. Shepherd



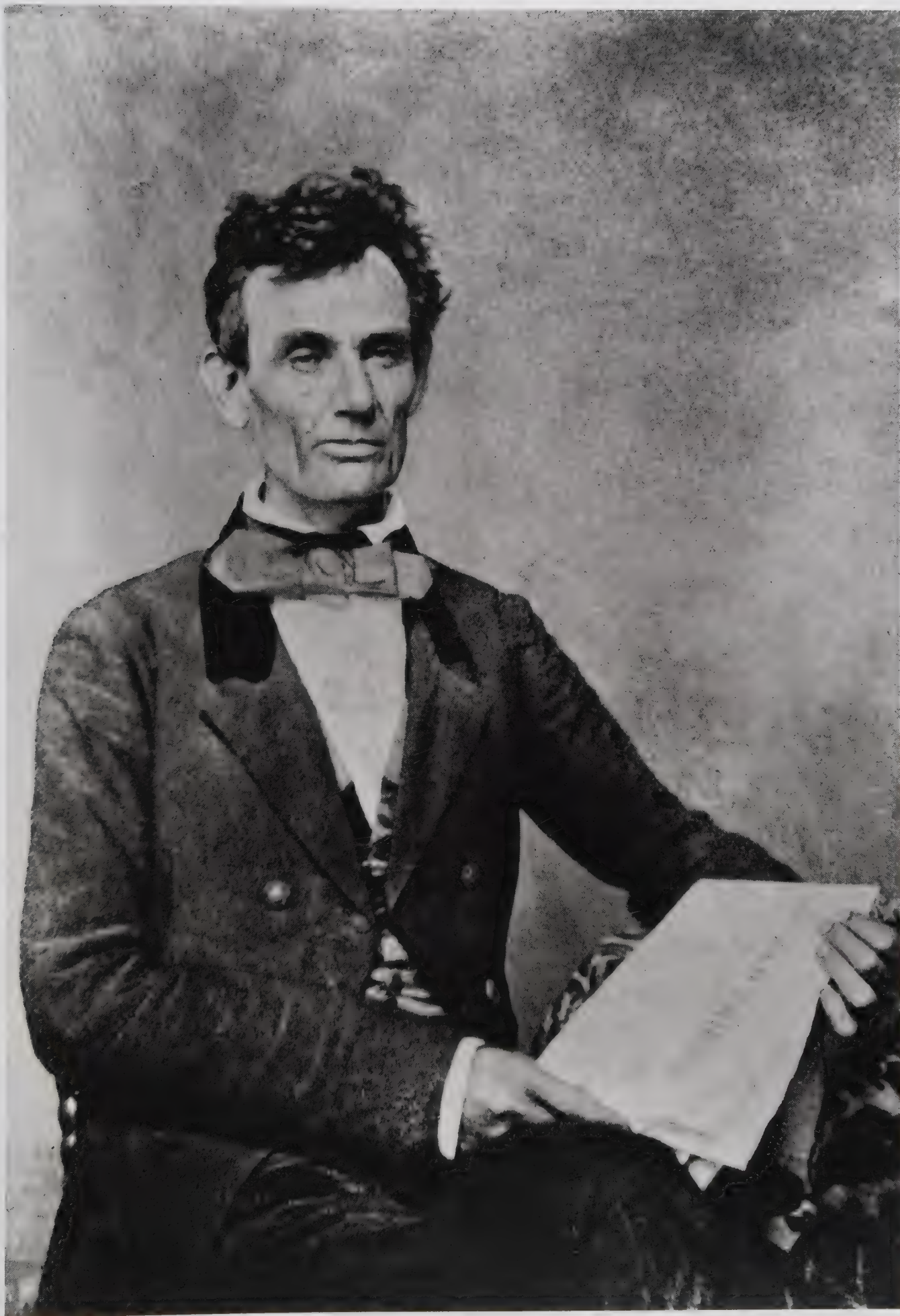


PROBABLY OCTOBER 27, 1854

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by J. C. F. Polycarpus von Schneidau





FEBRUARY 28, 1857

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Alexander Hesler



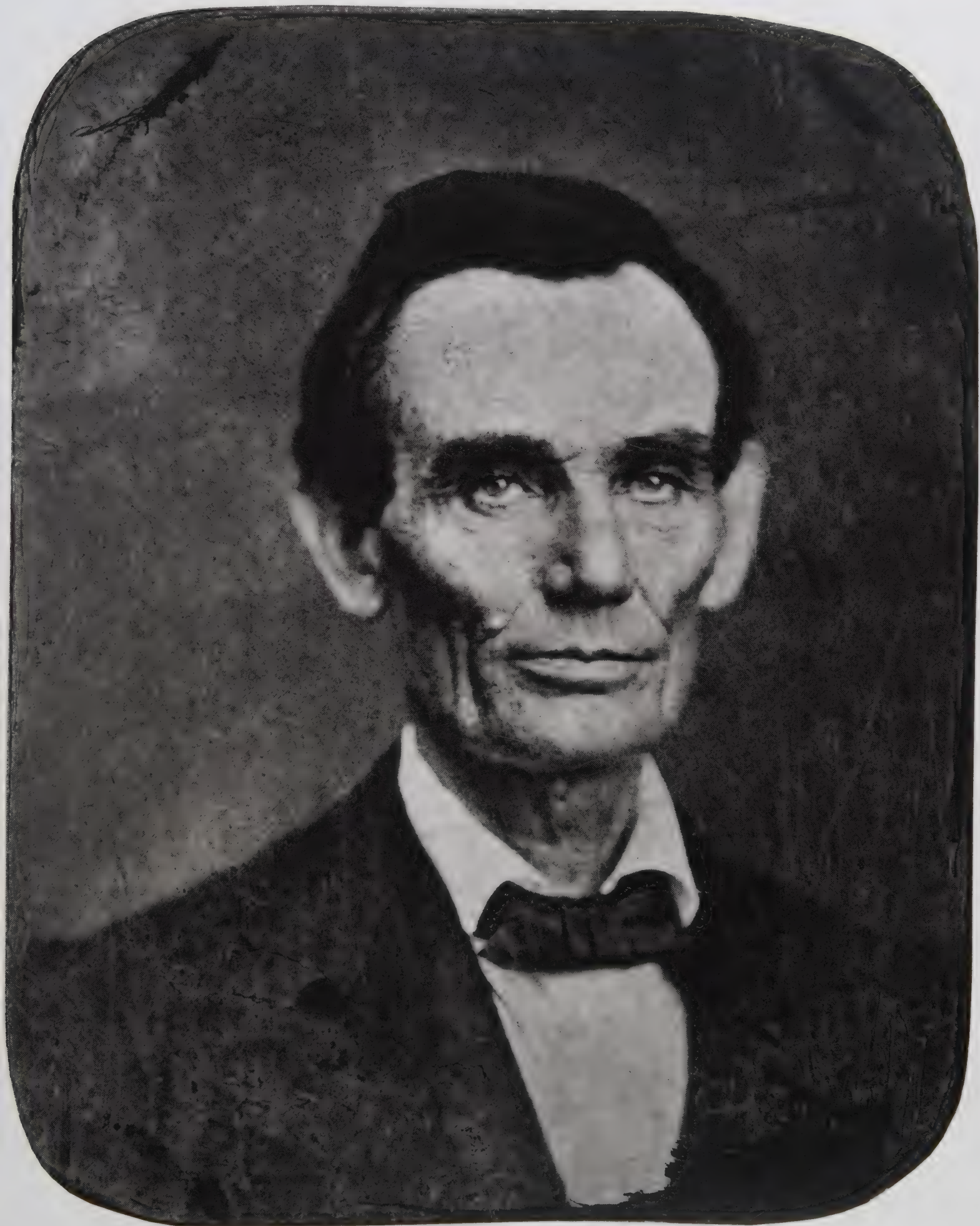


POSSIBLY MAY 27, 1857

DANVILLE, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Amon J. T. Joslin

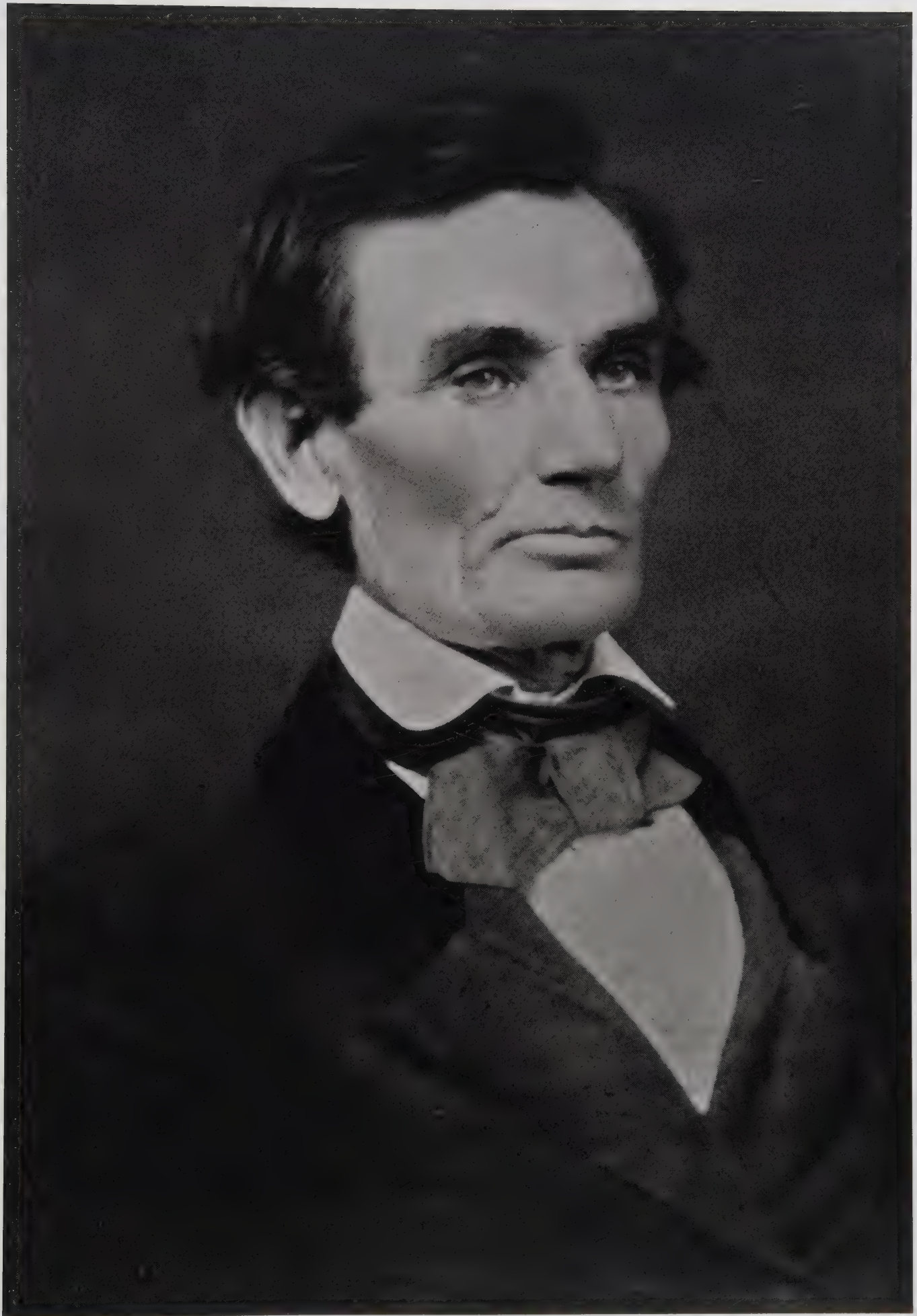




APRIL 25, 1858  
URBANA, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Samuel G. Alschuler

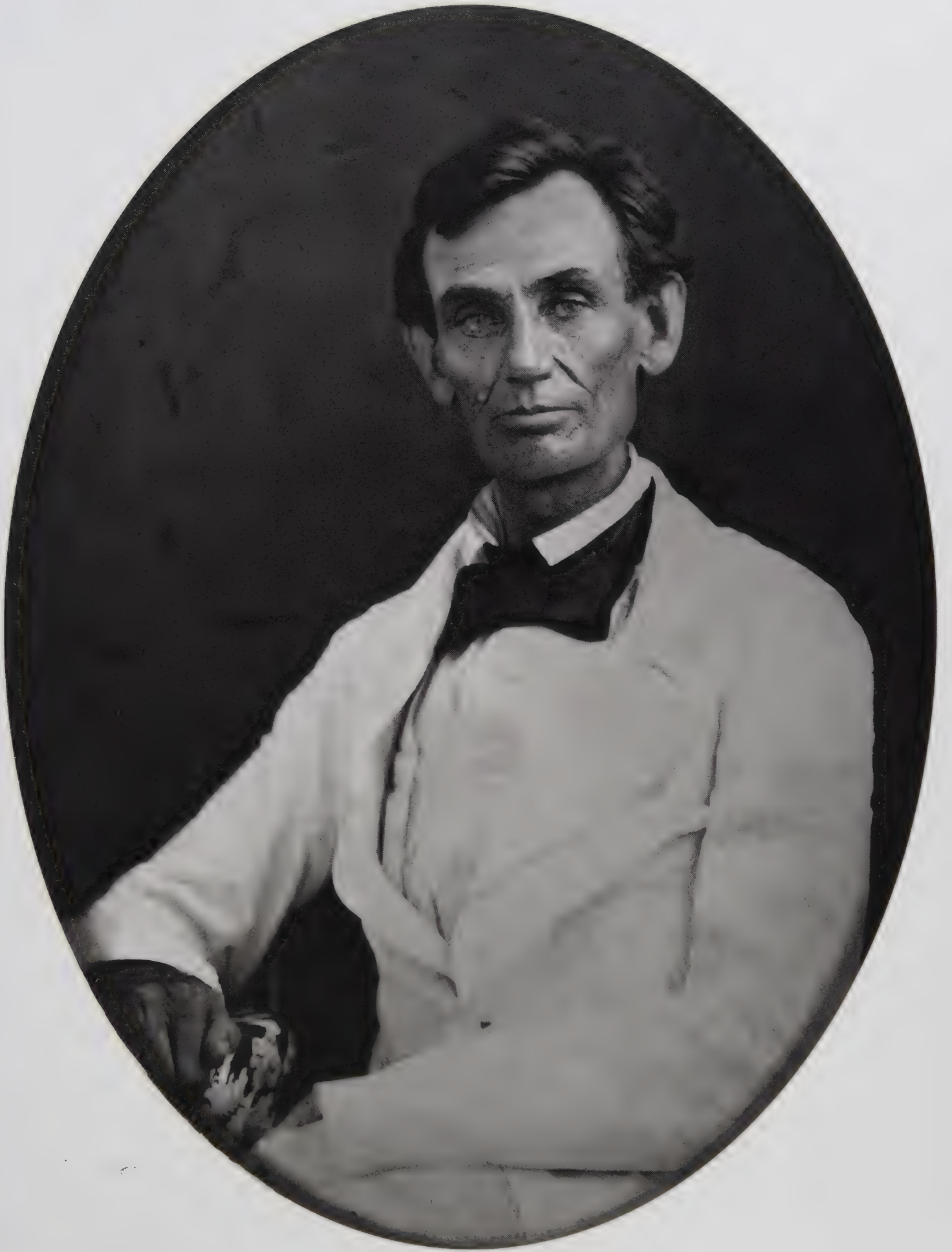




MAY 7, 1858  
BEARDSTOWN, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Abraham B. Byers

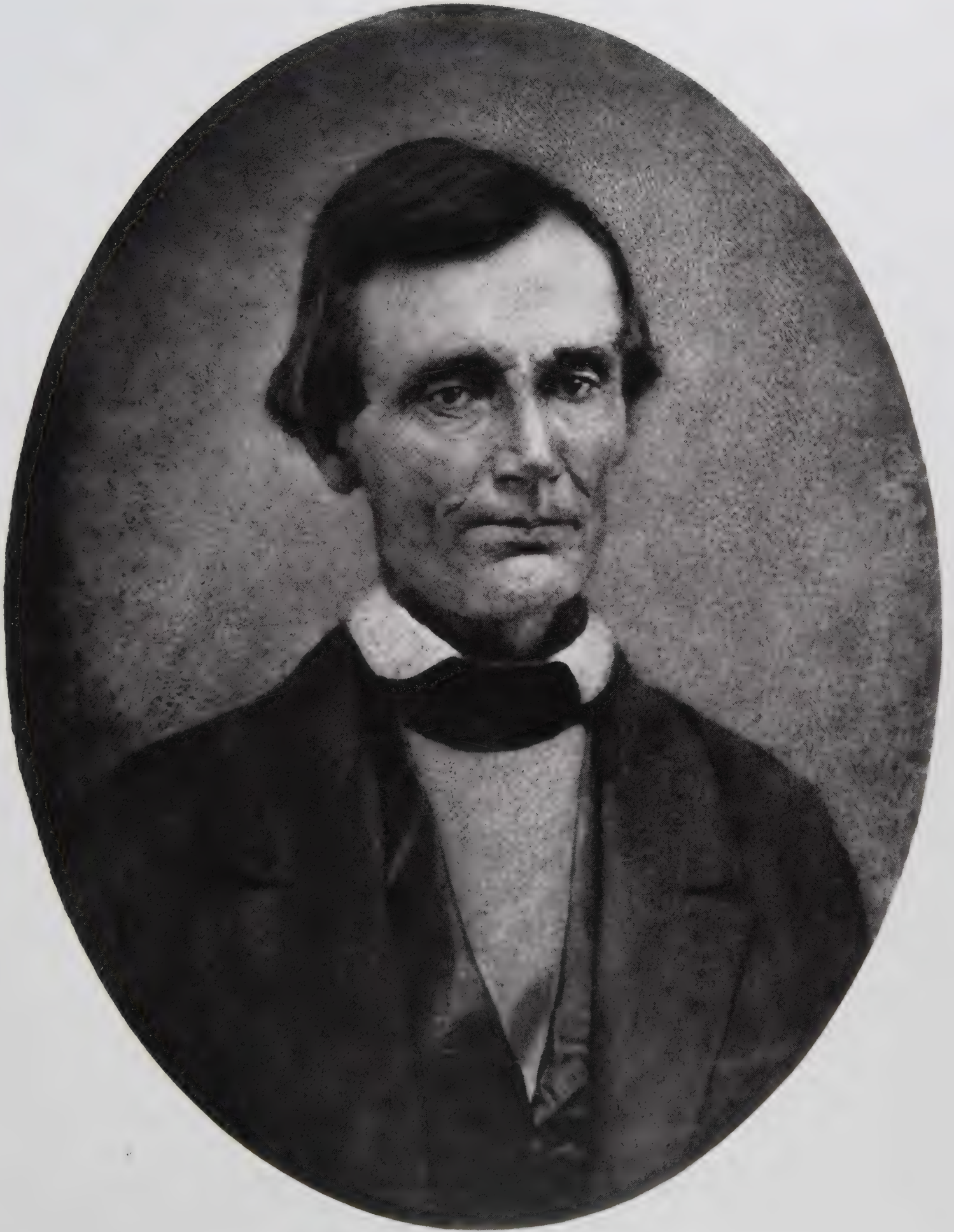




CIRCA JULY 18, 1858  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Preston Butler



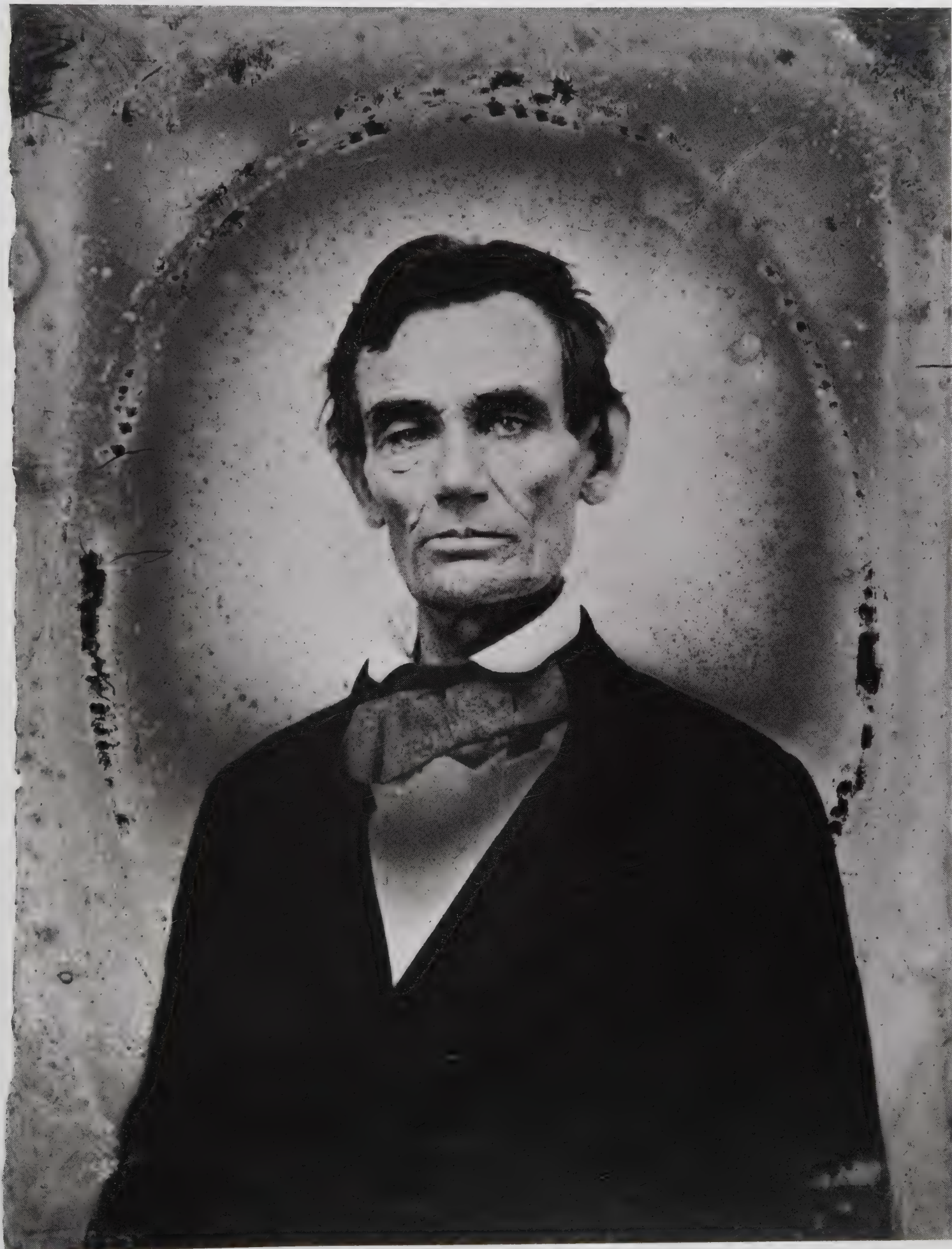


AUGUST 26, 1858

MACOMB, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by T. P. Pearson



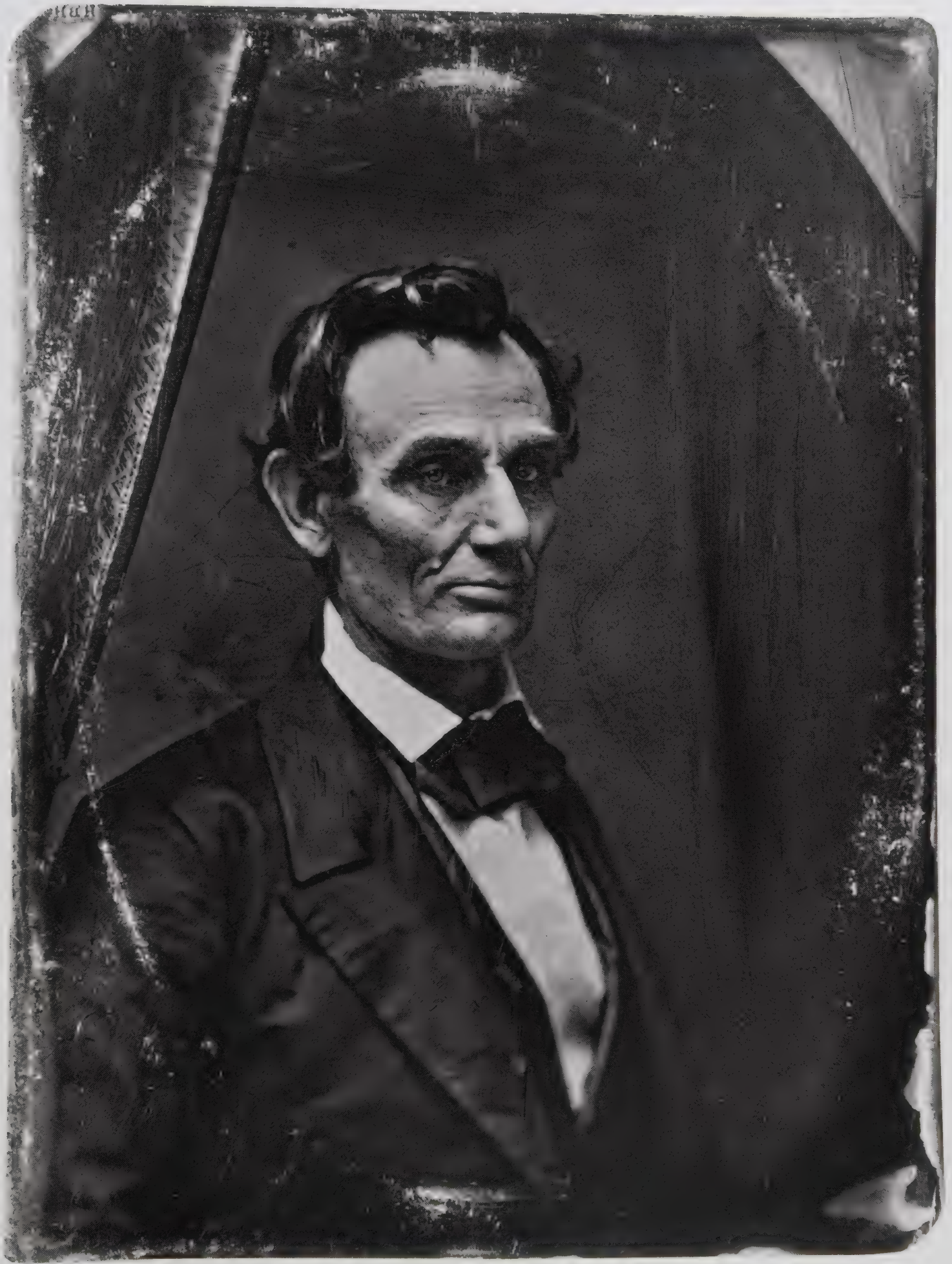


POSSIBLY SEPTEMBER 26, 1858

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph probably by Christopher S. German

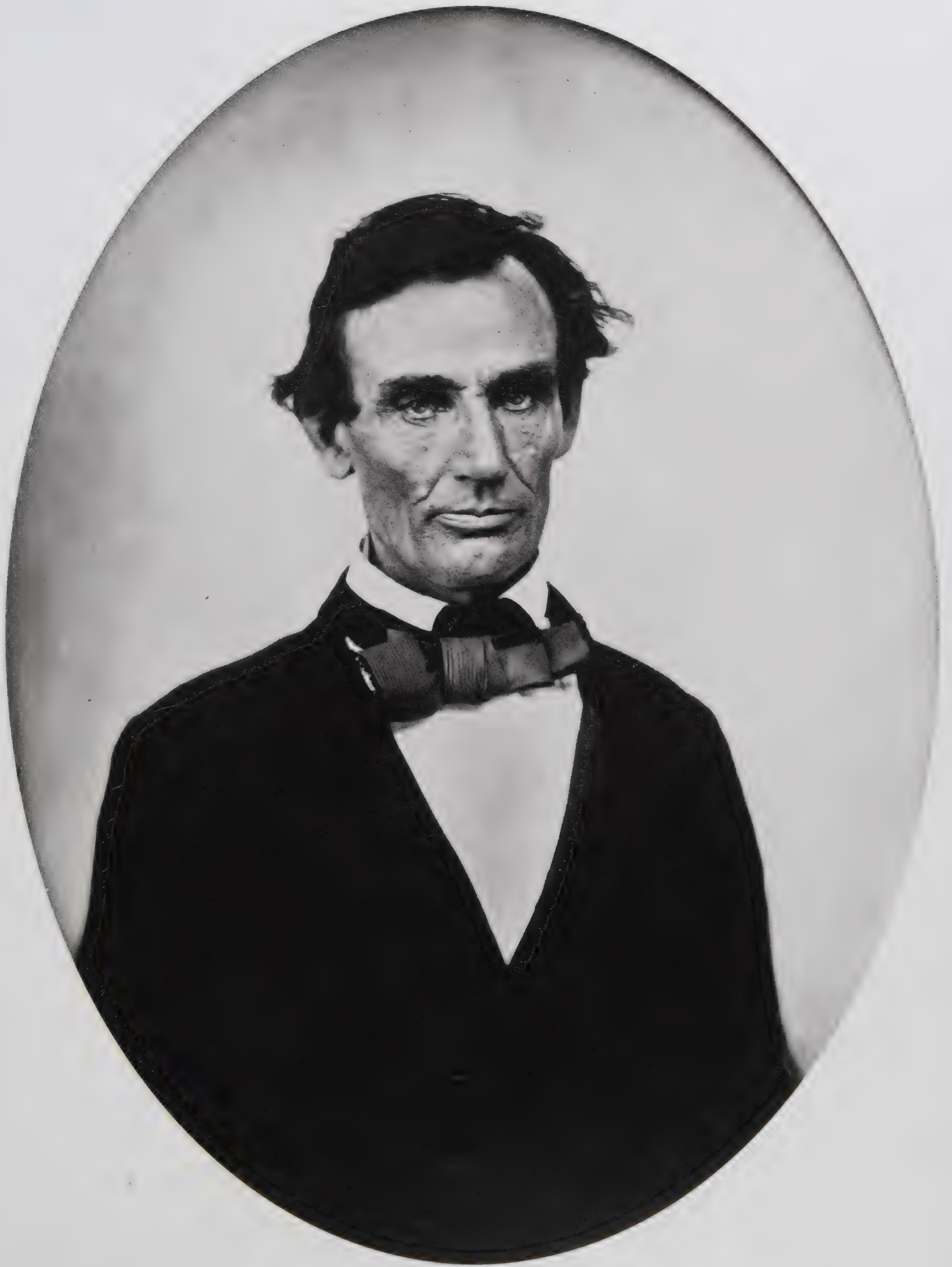




OCTOBER 1, 1858  
PITTSFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Calvin Jackson

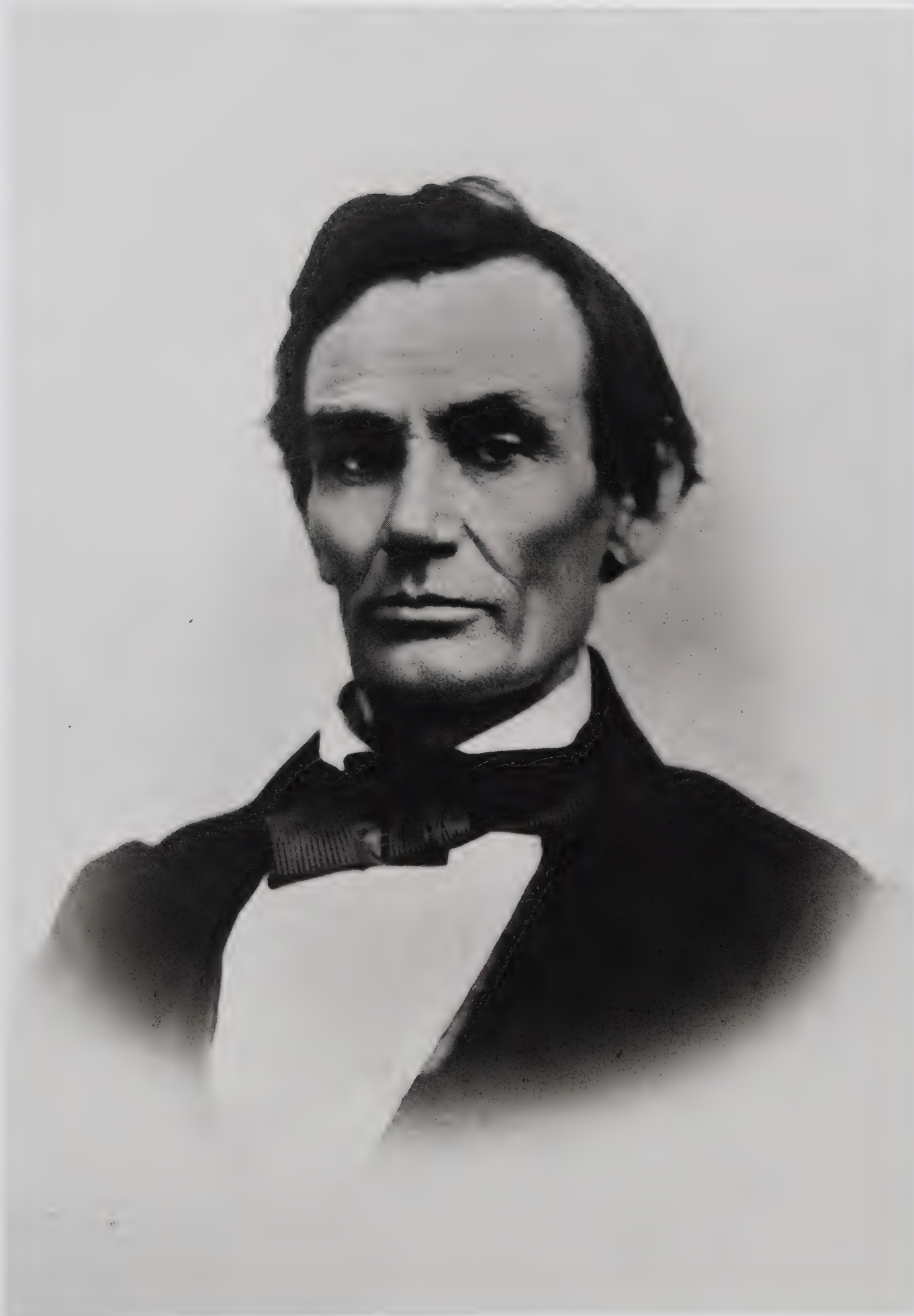




OCTOBER 11, 1858  
MONMOUTH, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by William Judkins Thomson

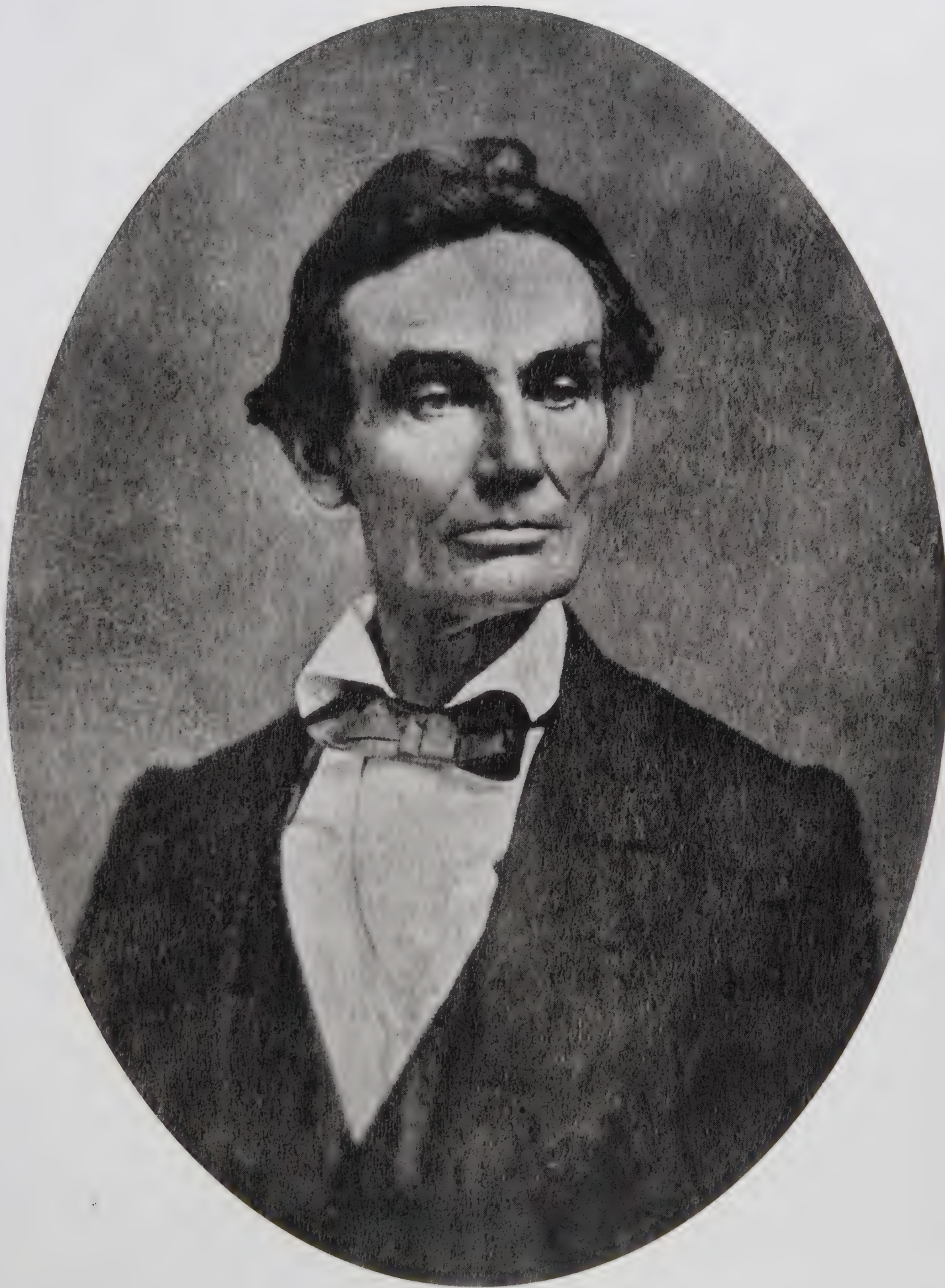




CIRCA 1858  
PROBABLY ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer



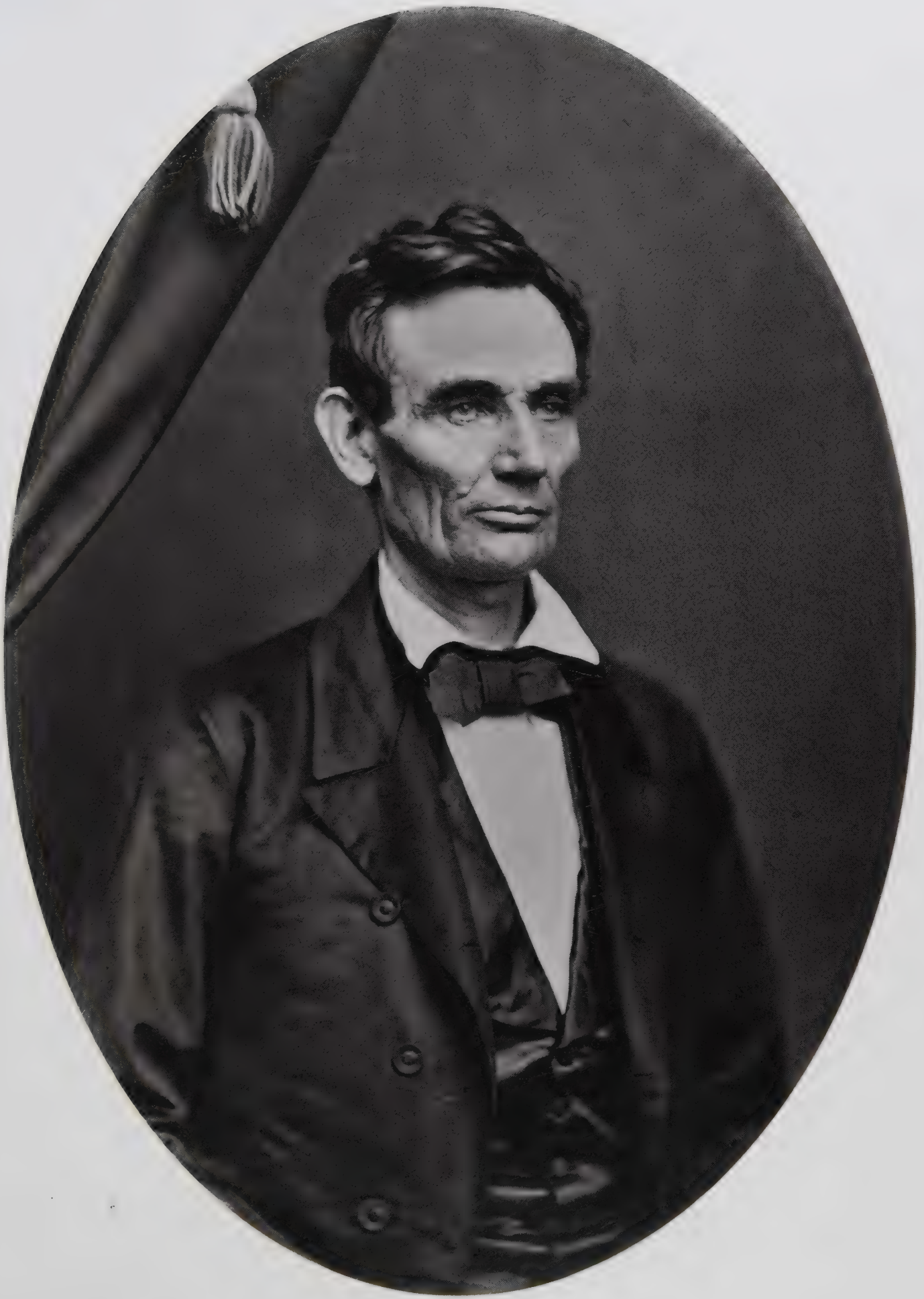


CIRCA 1858

POSSIBLY PEORIA OR SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph possibly by  
Roderick M. Cole or Preston Butler





CIRCA 1859  
PROBABLY OHIO

•

Unknown photographer

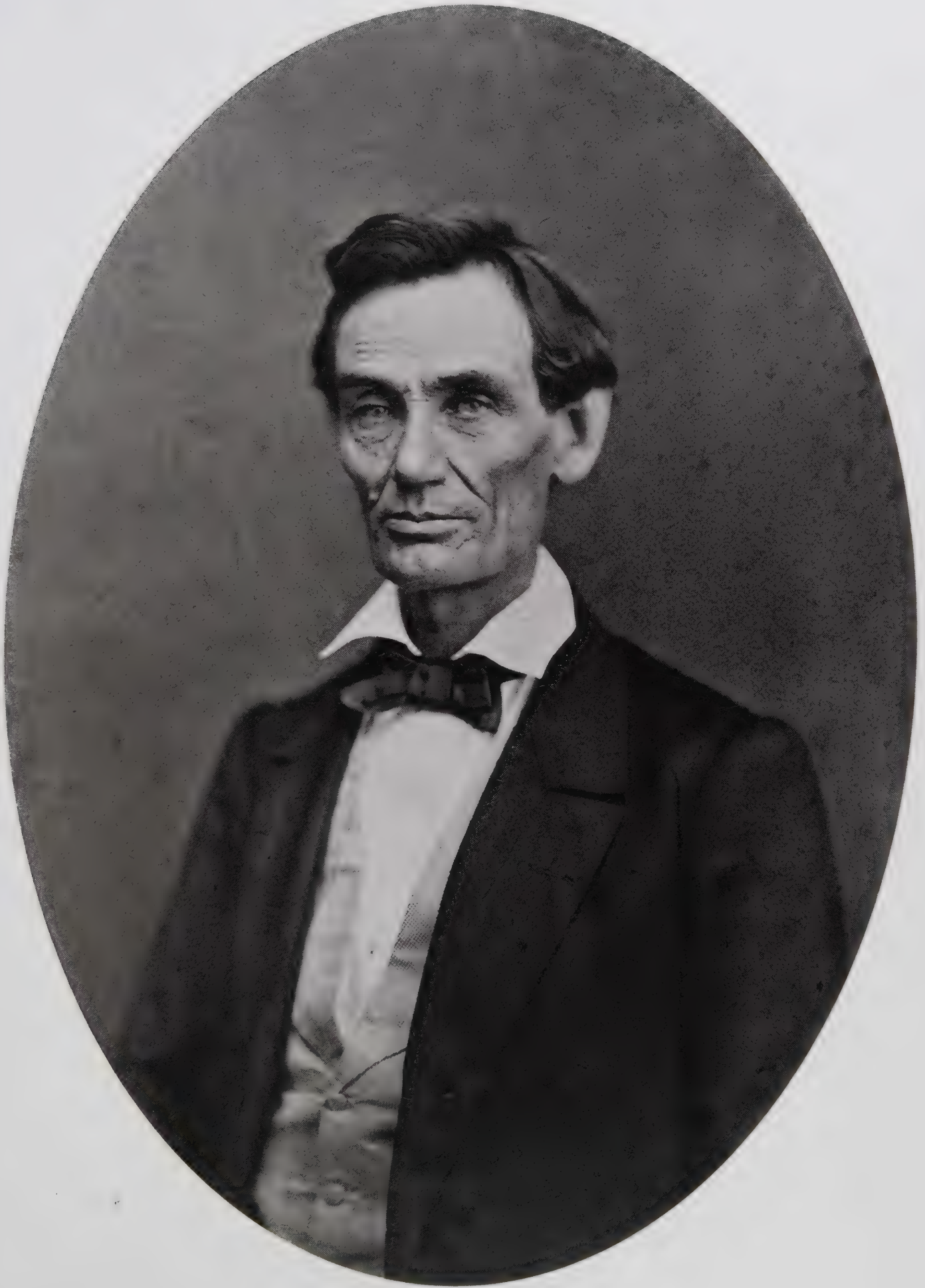




CIRCA 1859  
PROBABLY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer

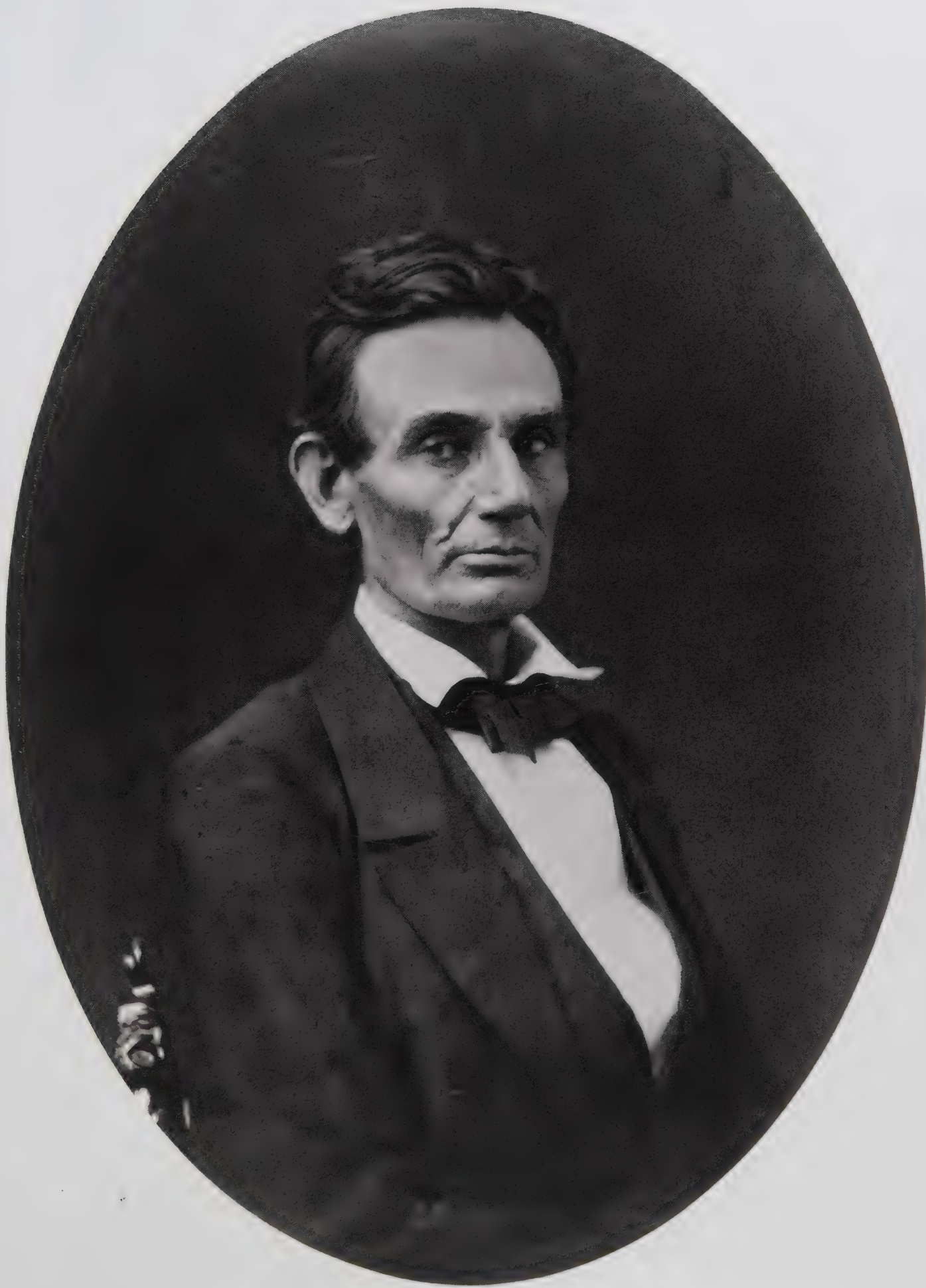




OCTOBER 4, 1859  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Samuel M. Fassett



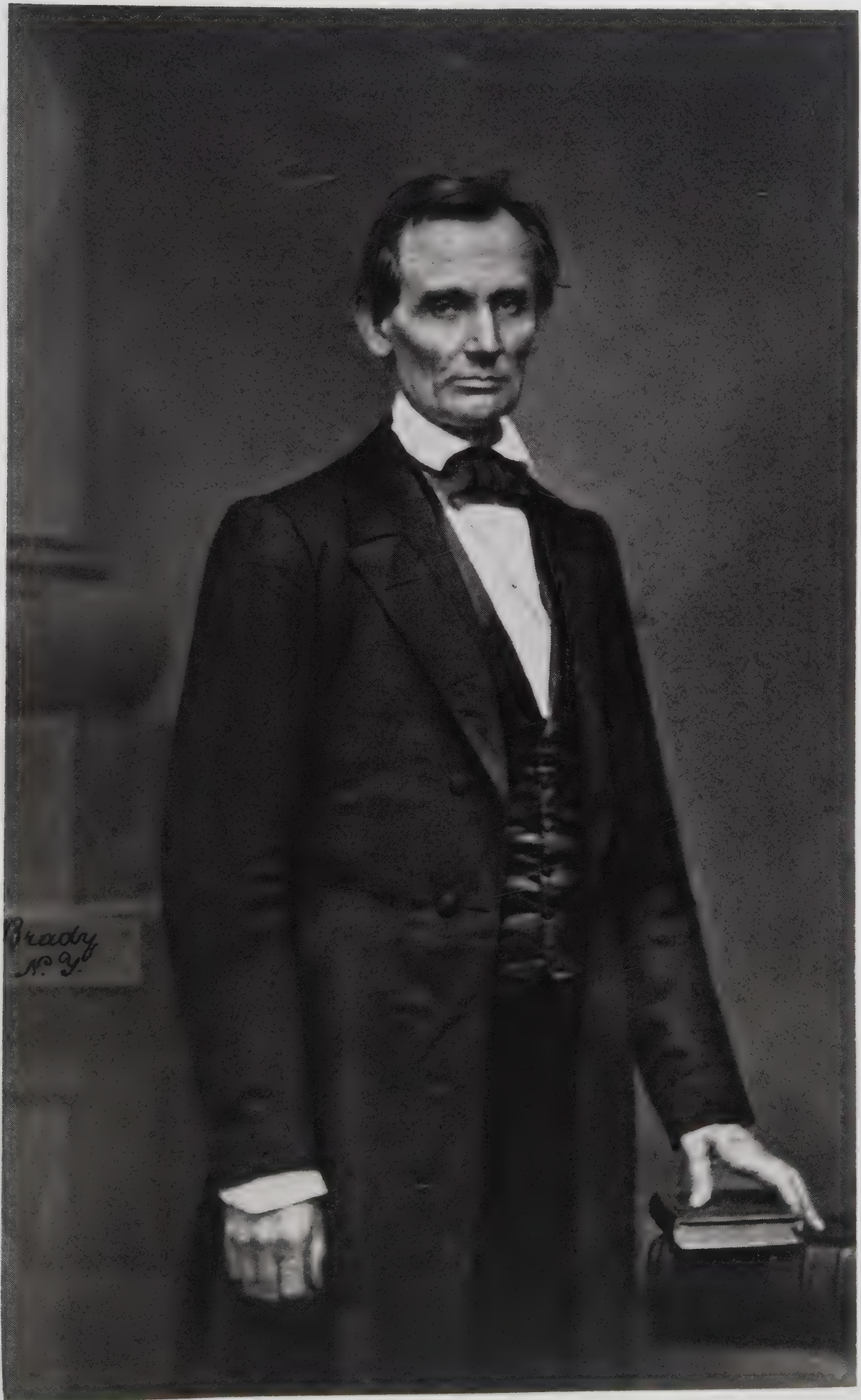


FEBRUARY 27, 1860

NEW YORK CITY

•

Photograph by Mathew B. Brady

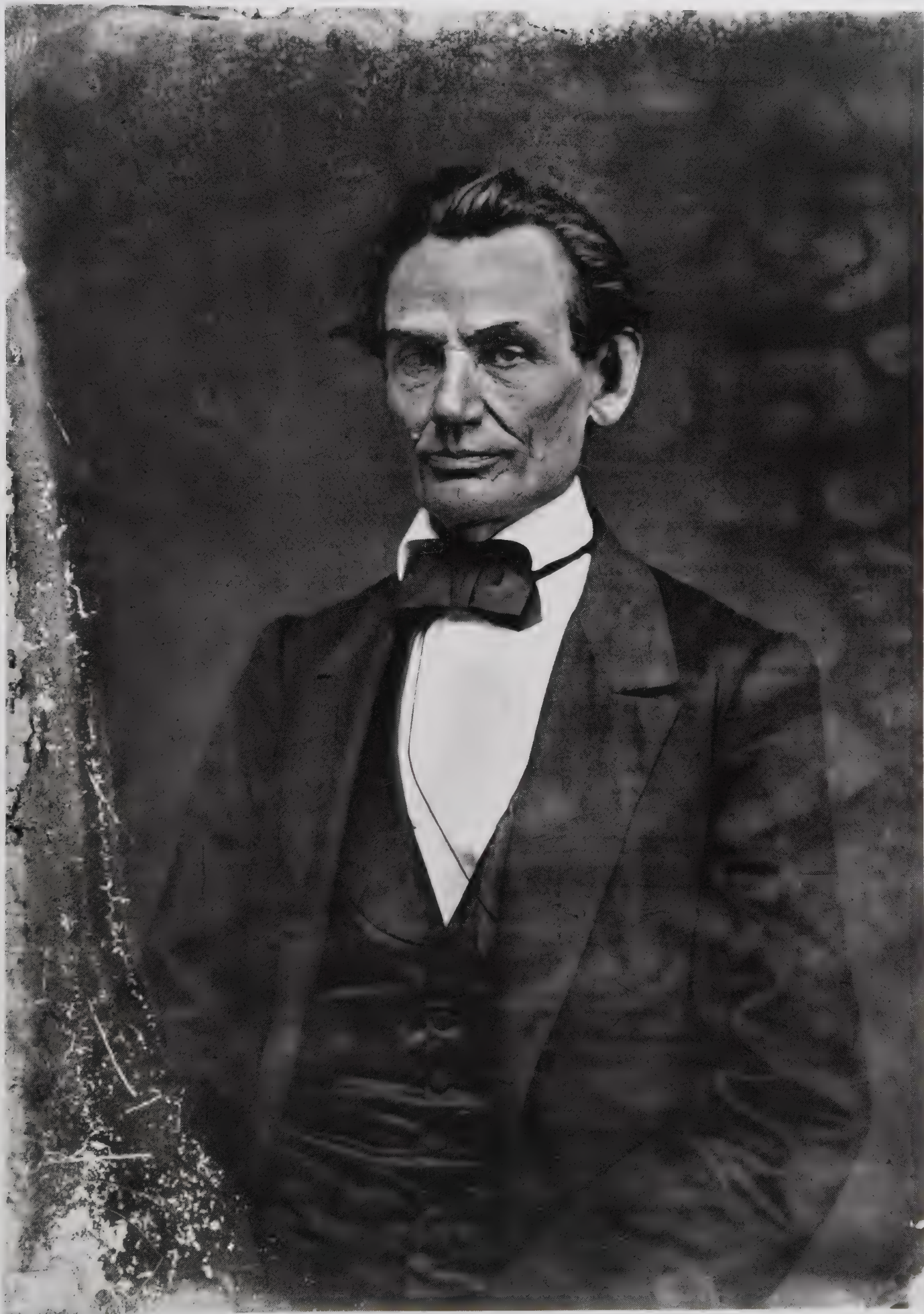




MAY 9, 1860  
DECATUR, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Edward A. Barnwell

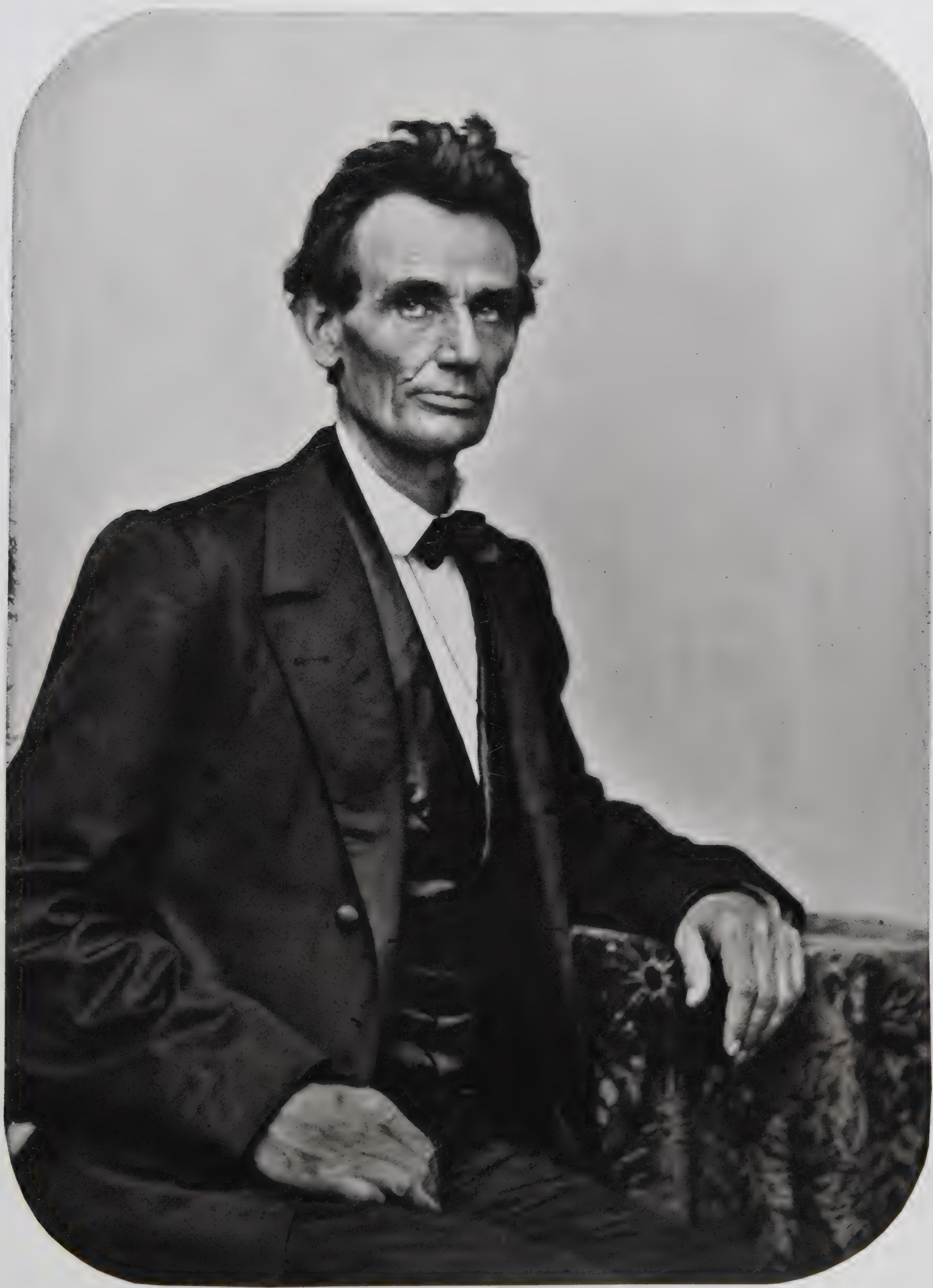




MAY 20, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph probably by Preston Butler





MAY 20, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph probably by Preston Butler

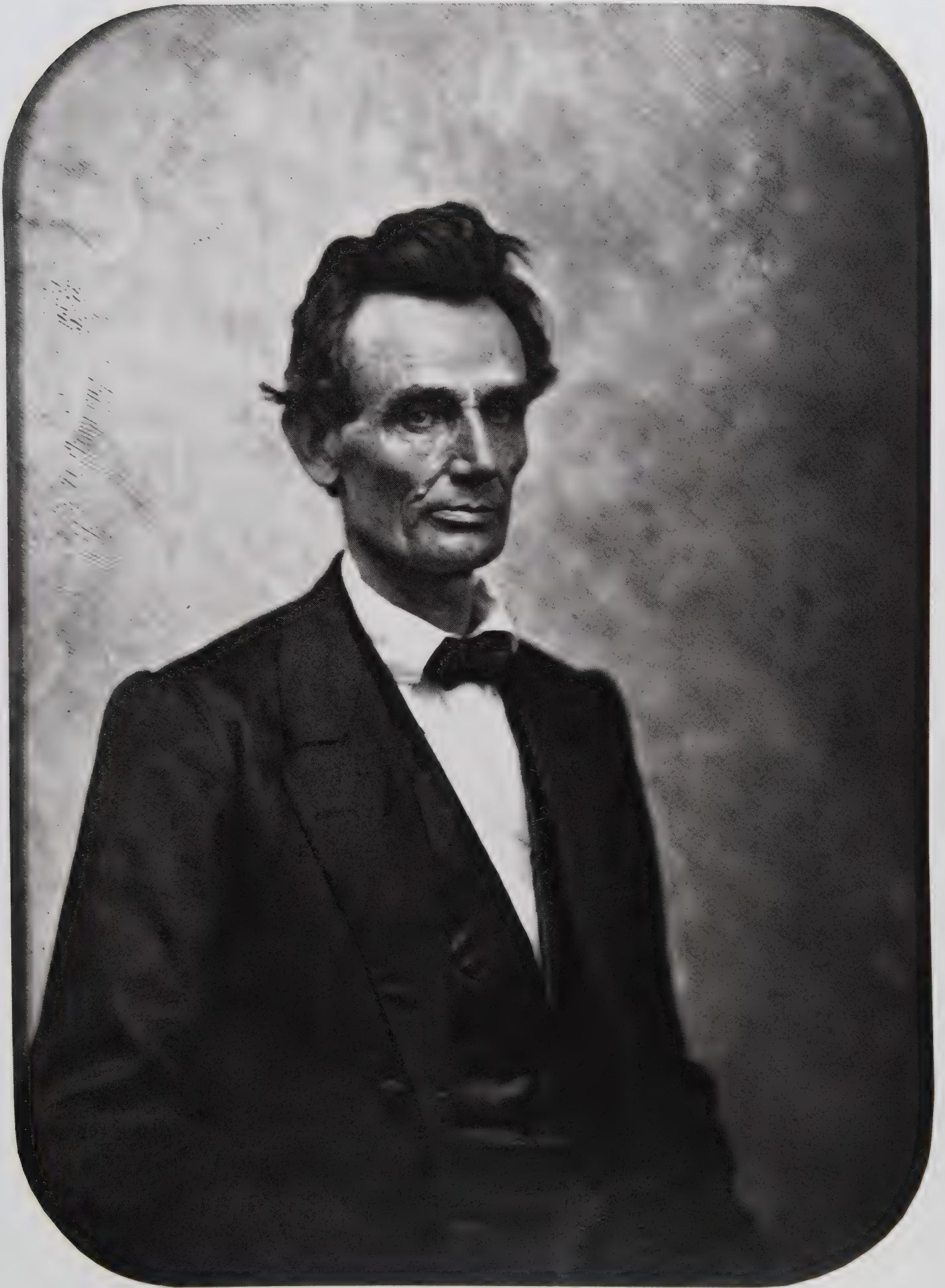




MAY 20, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph probably by Preston Butler

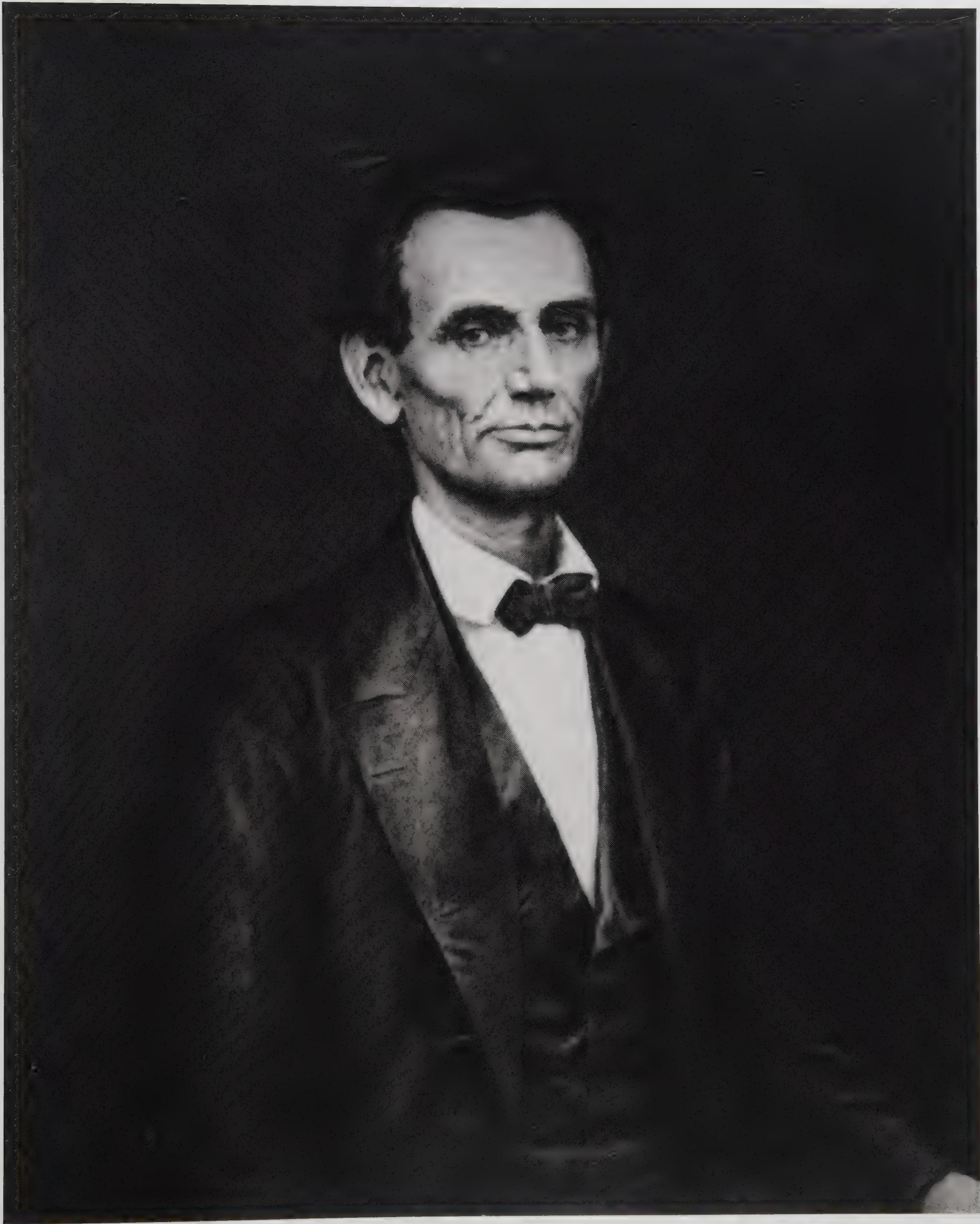




MAY 20, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph probably by Preston Butler





CIRCA MAY 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer

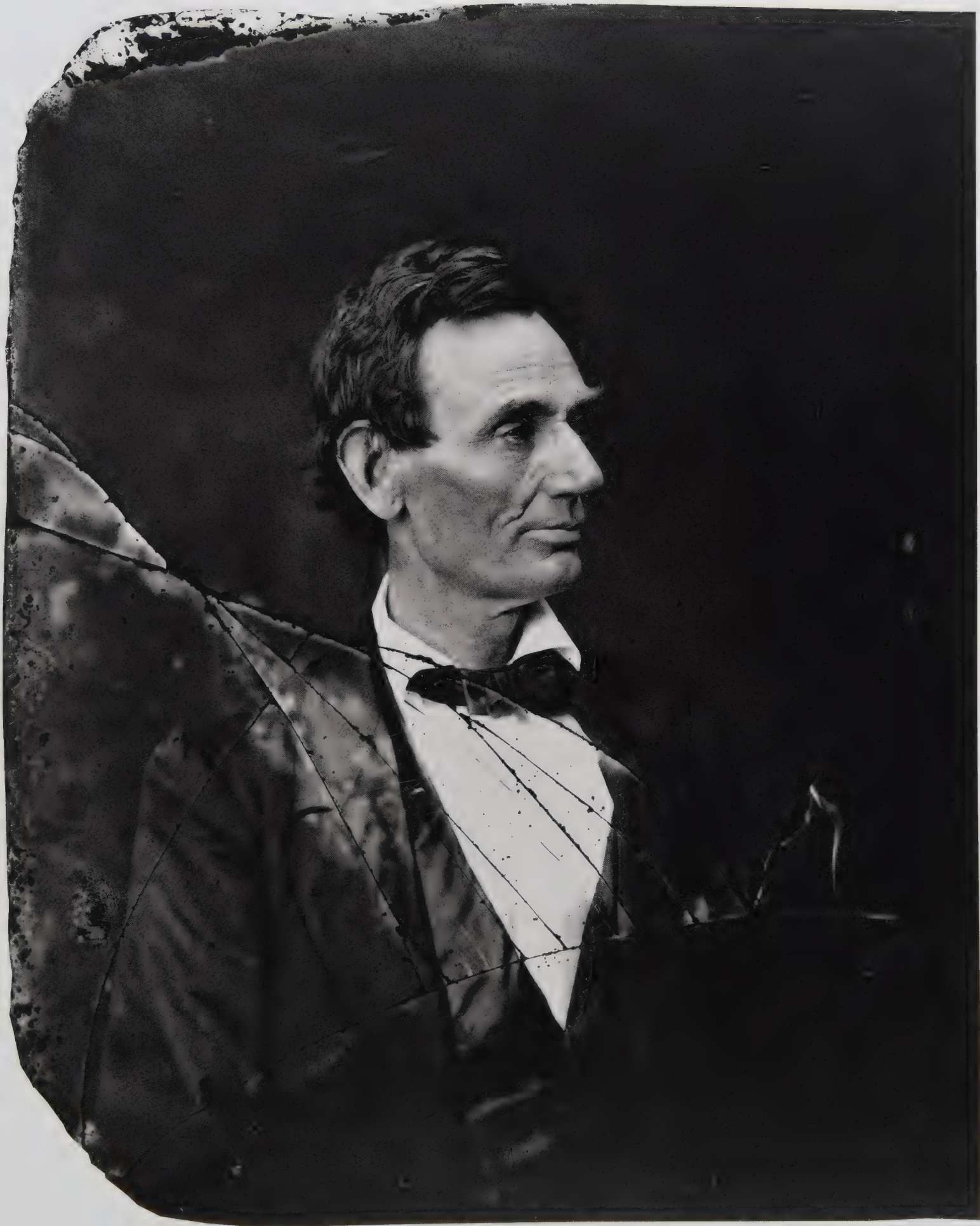




JUNE 3, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Alexander Hesler

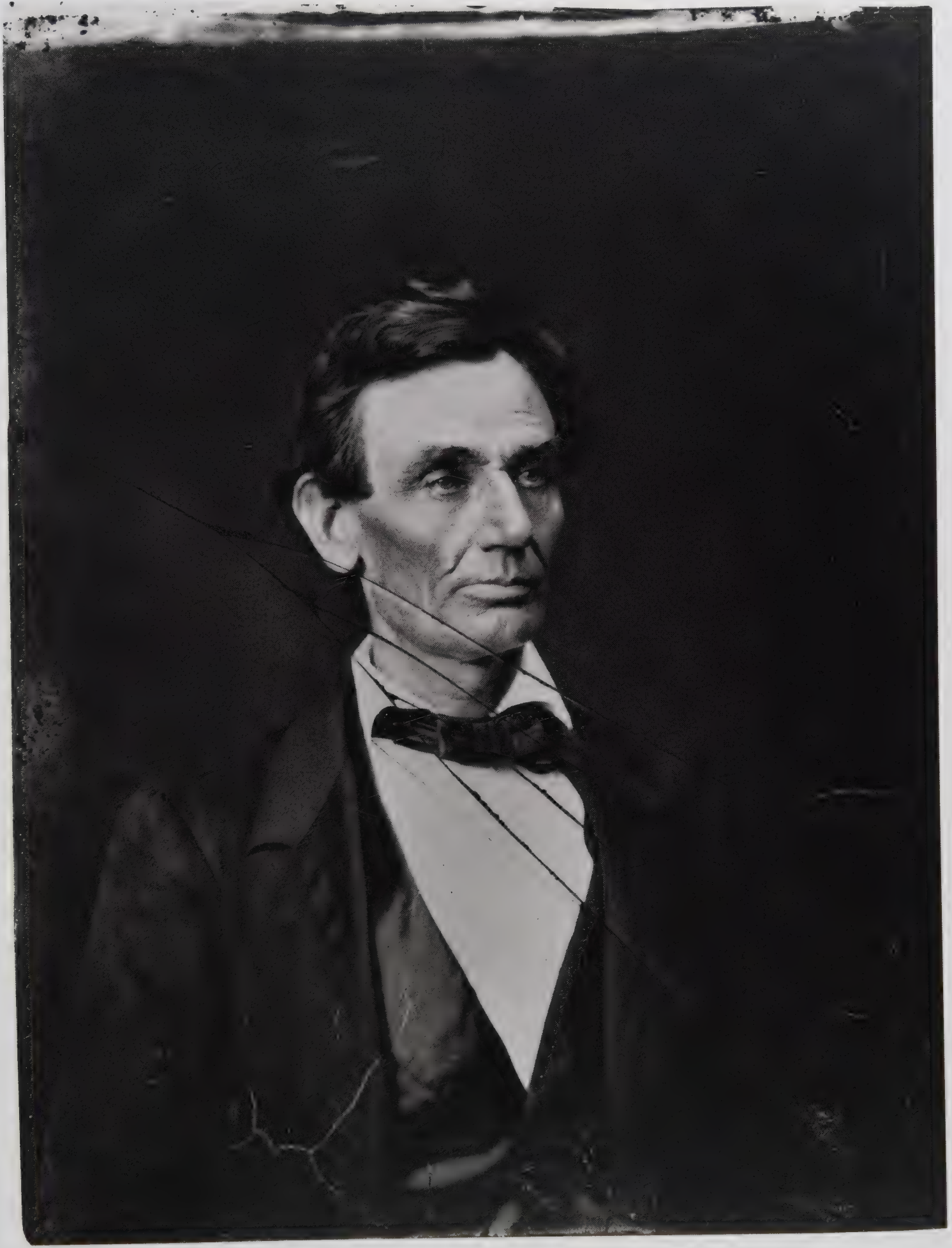




JUNE 3, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Alexander Hesler

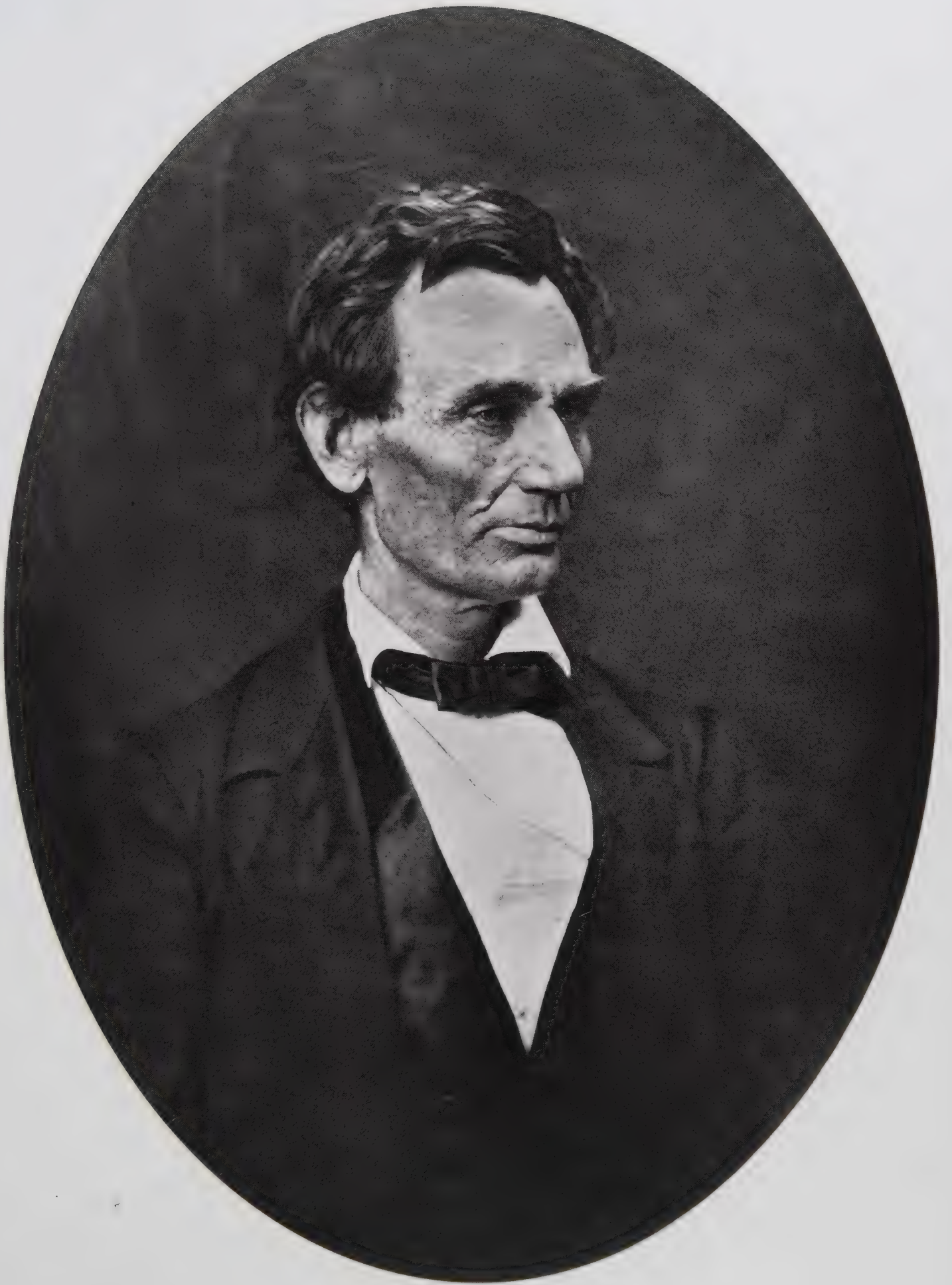


JUNE 3, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Alexander Hesler

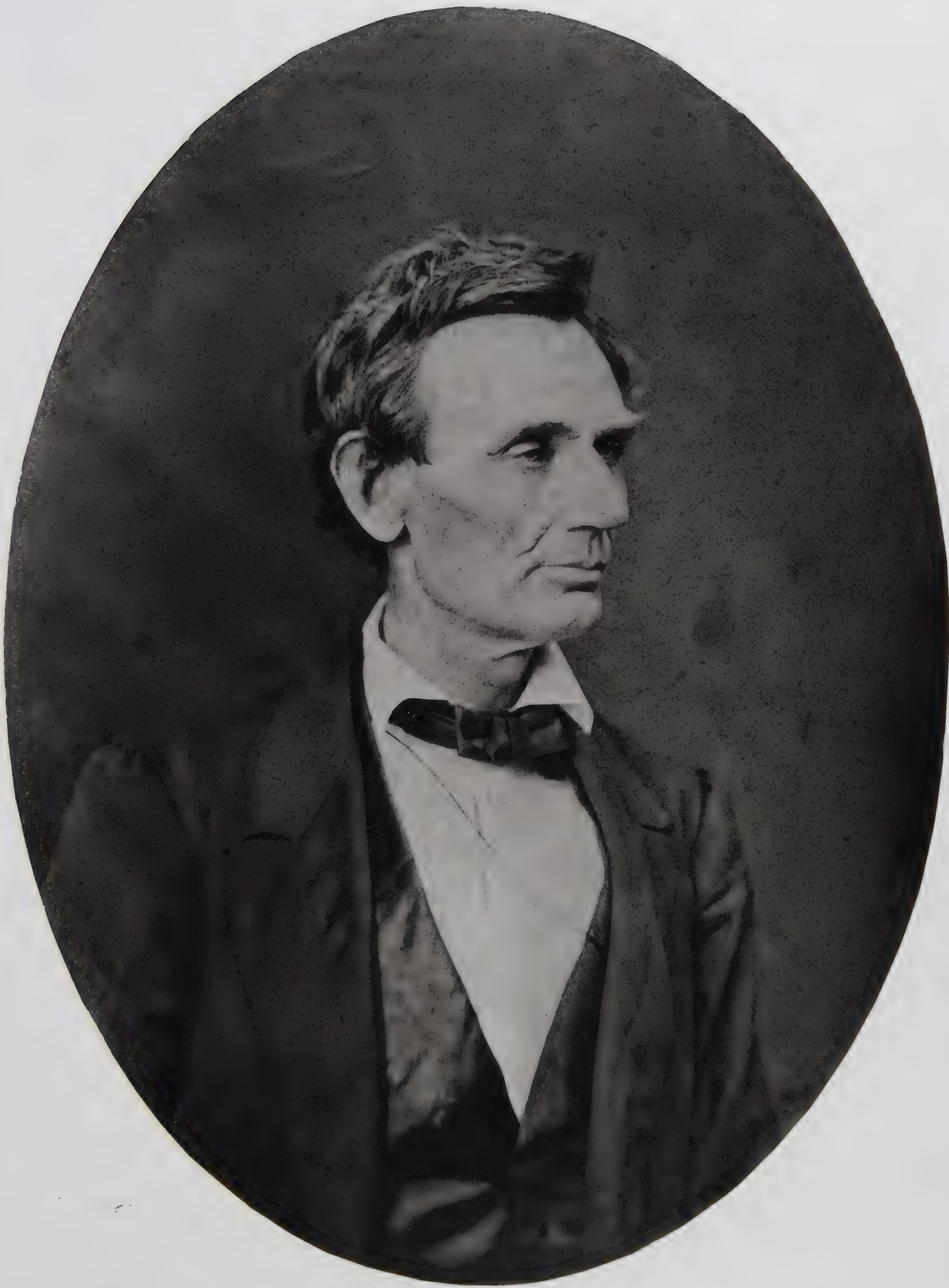




JUNE 3, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Alexander Hesler

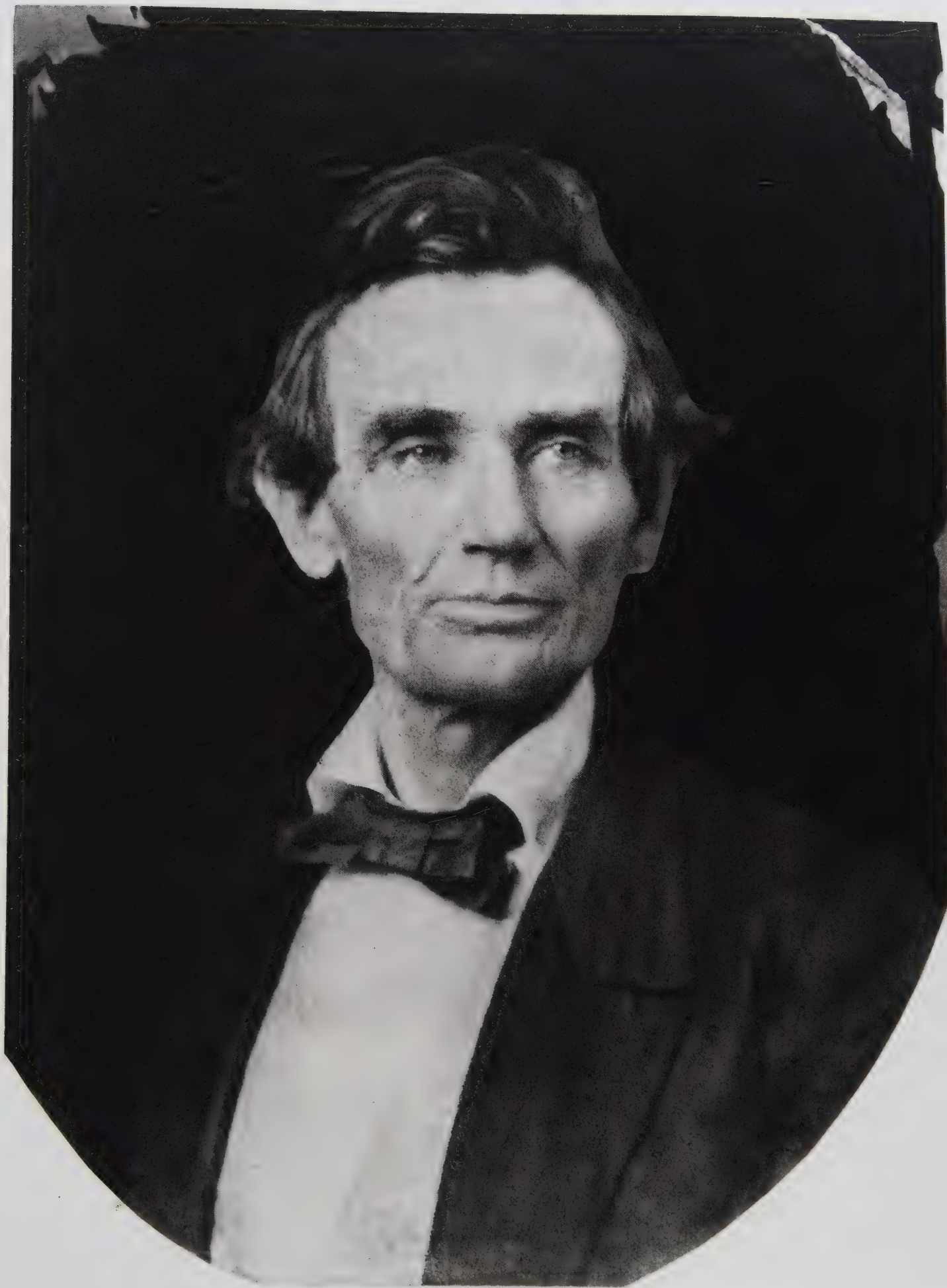




CIRCA JUNE/JULY 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Joseph Hill

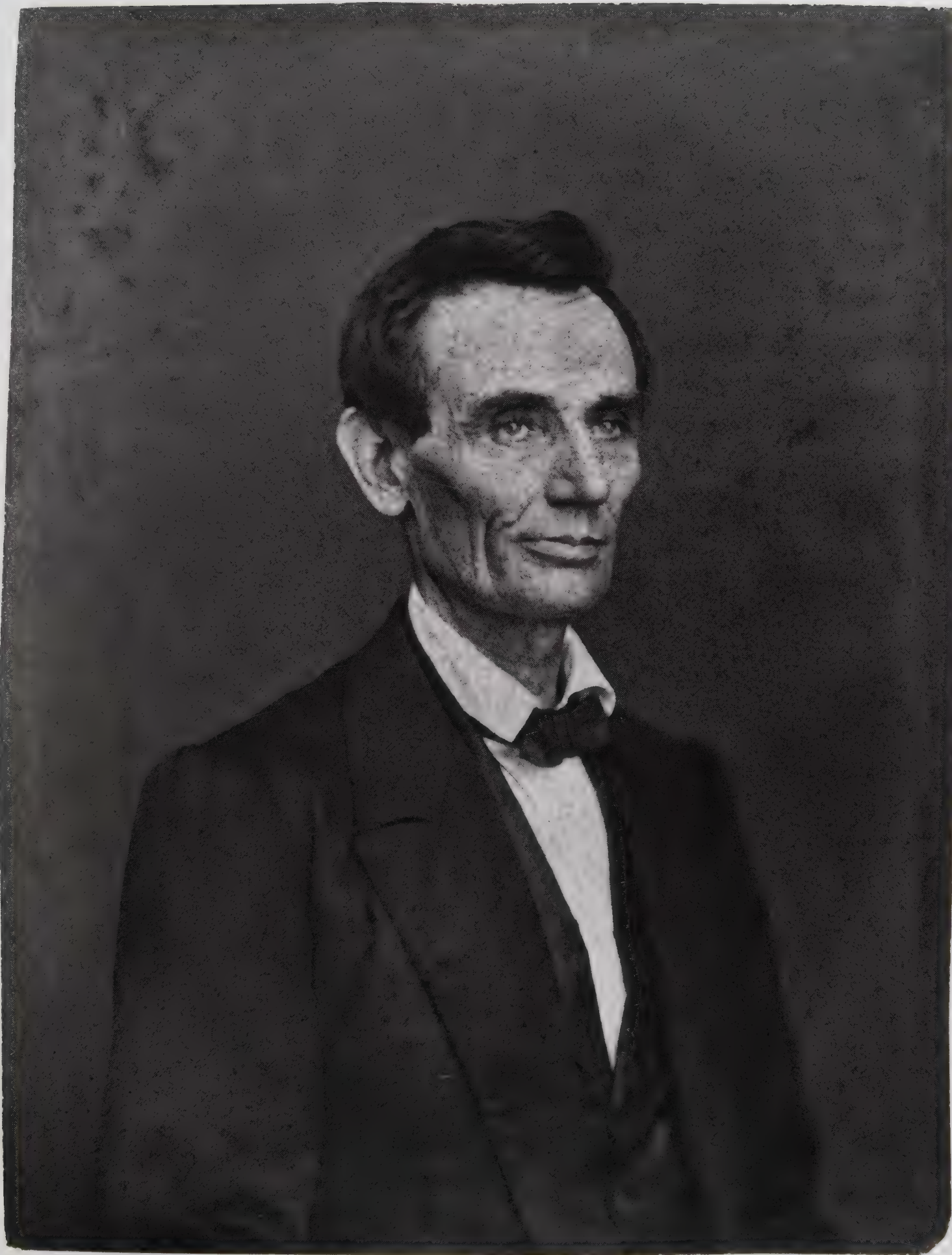


CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860  
POSSIBLY SPRINGFIELD OR CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer





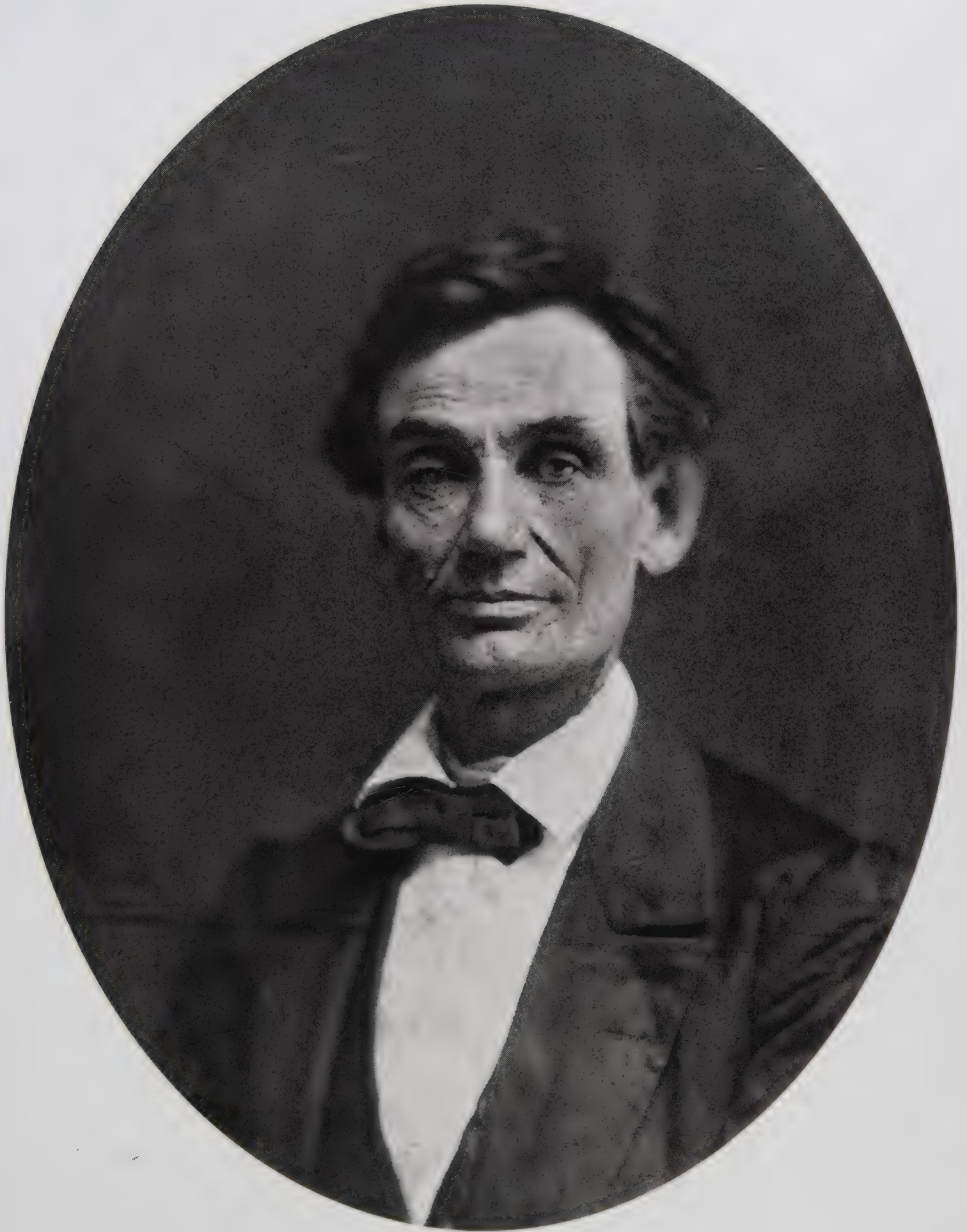
CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by William Seavy







CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860  
PROBABLY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer

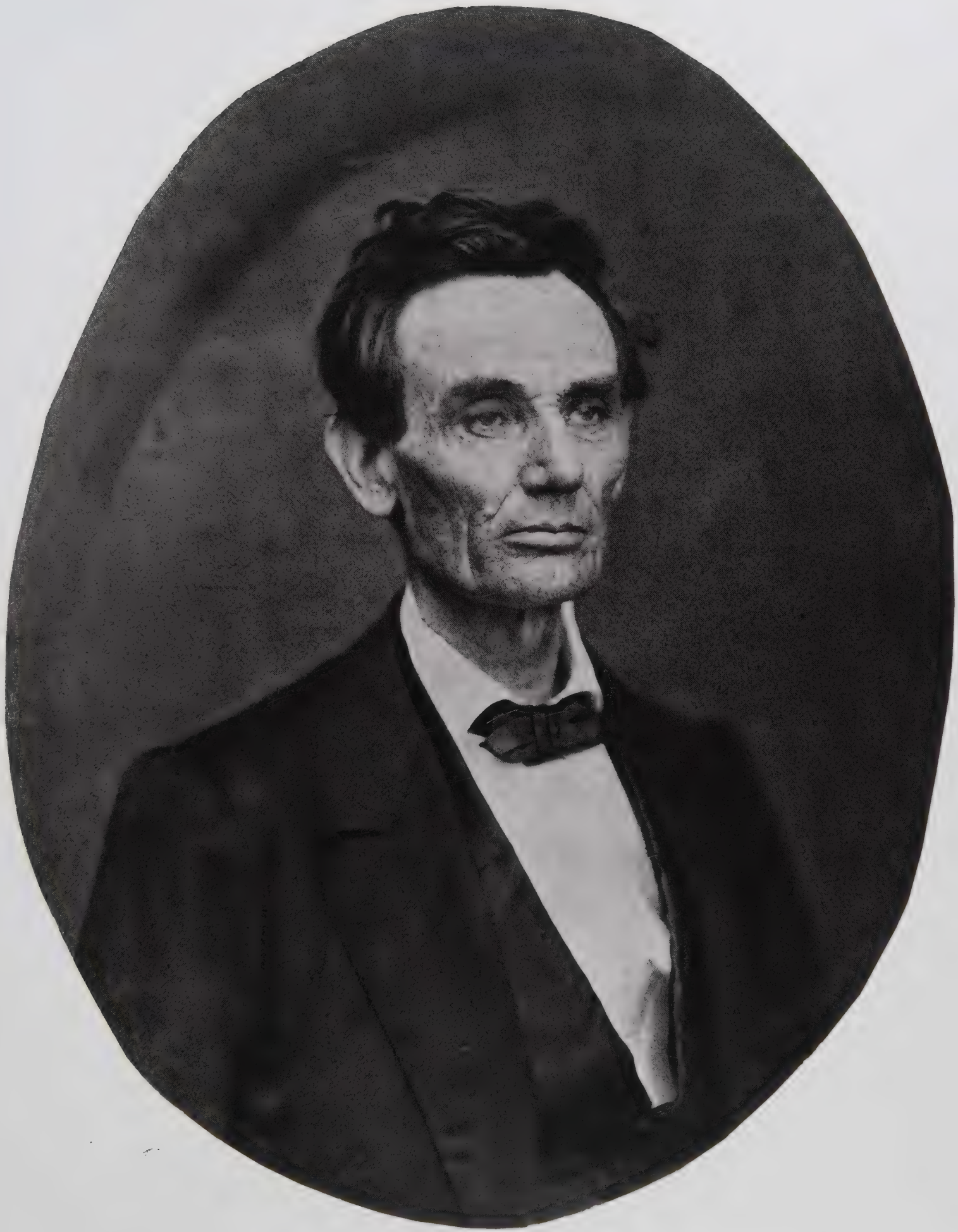


CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860  
PROBABLY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer

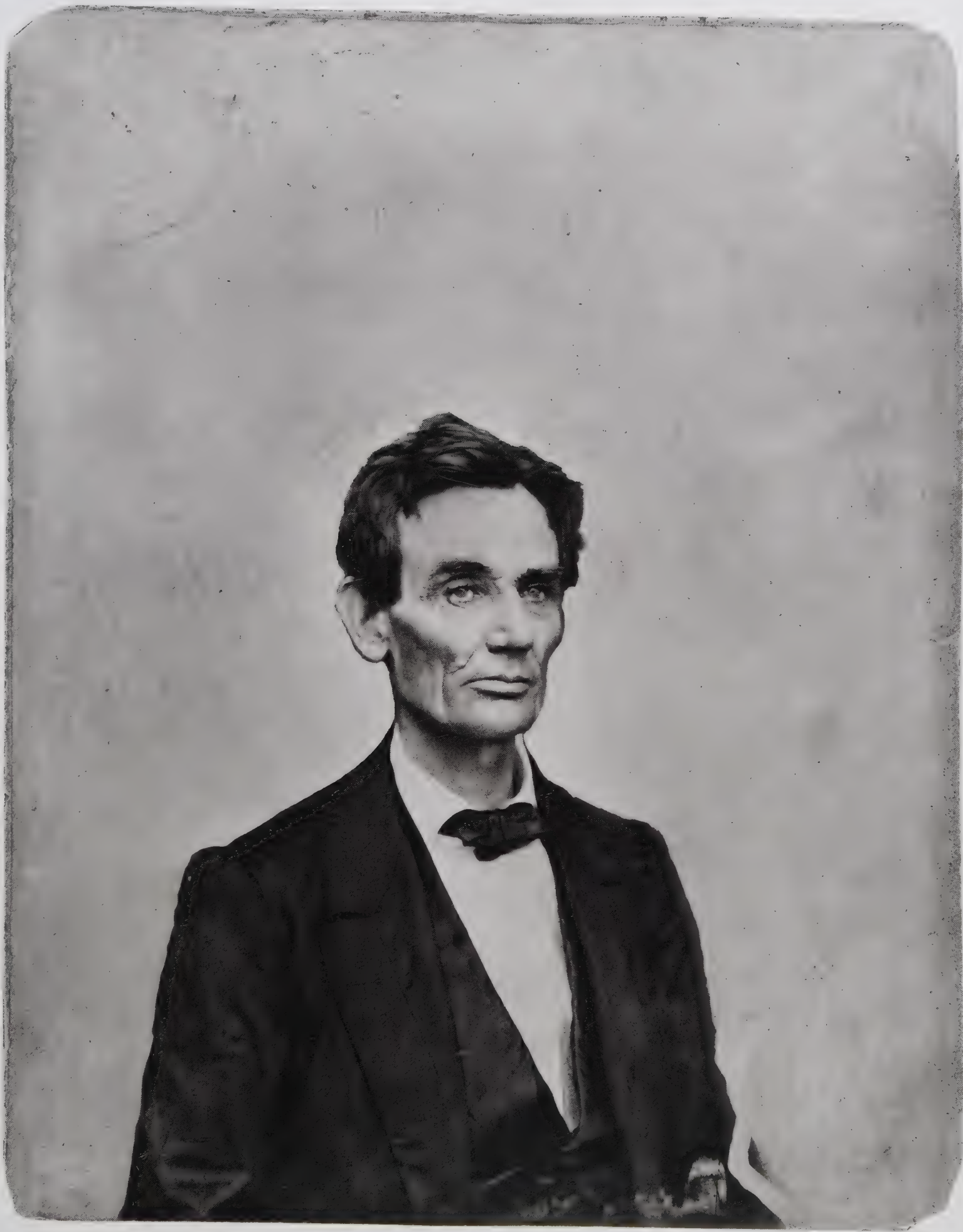




CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860  
PROBABLY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by William A. Shaw





CIRCA SPRING OR SUMMER 1860  
PROBABLY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Unknown photographer



SUMMER 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by John Adams Whipple





SUMMER 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by John Adams Whipple







AUGUST 8, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by William A. Shaw

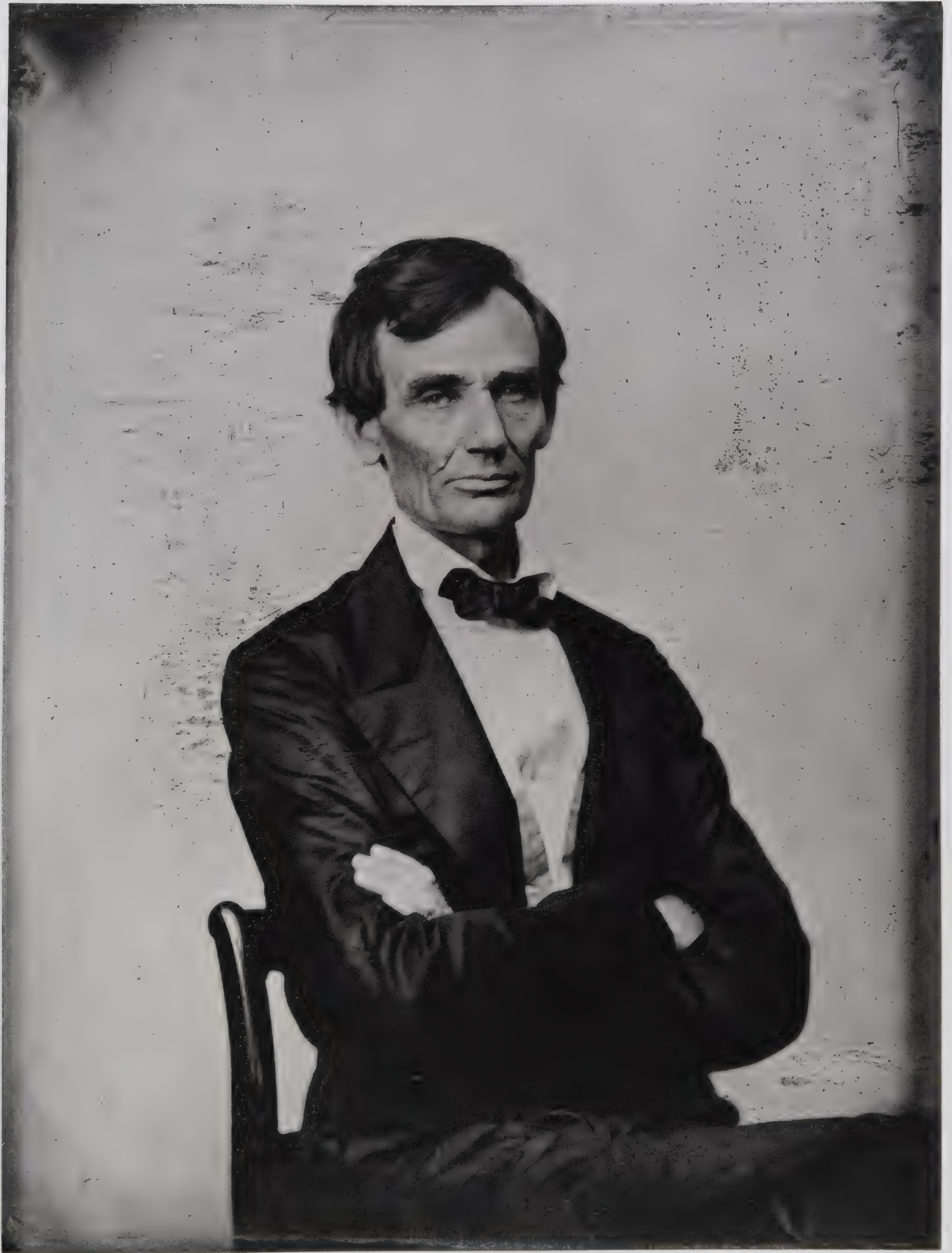


AUGUST 13, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Preston Butler

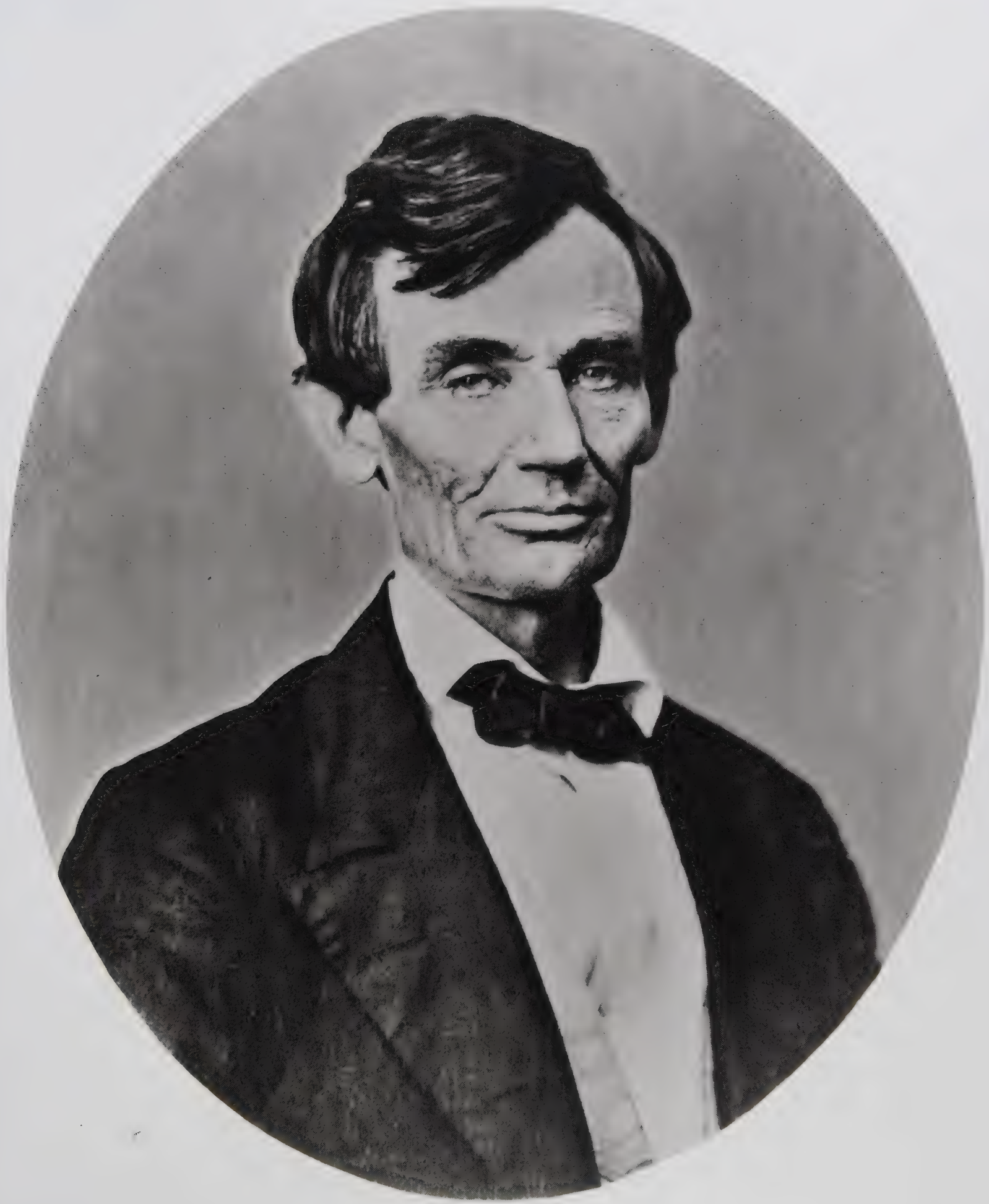




AUGUST 13, 1860  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Preston Butler



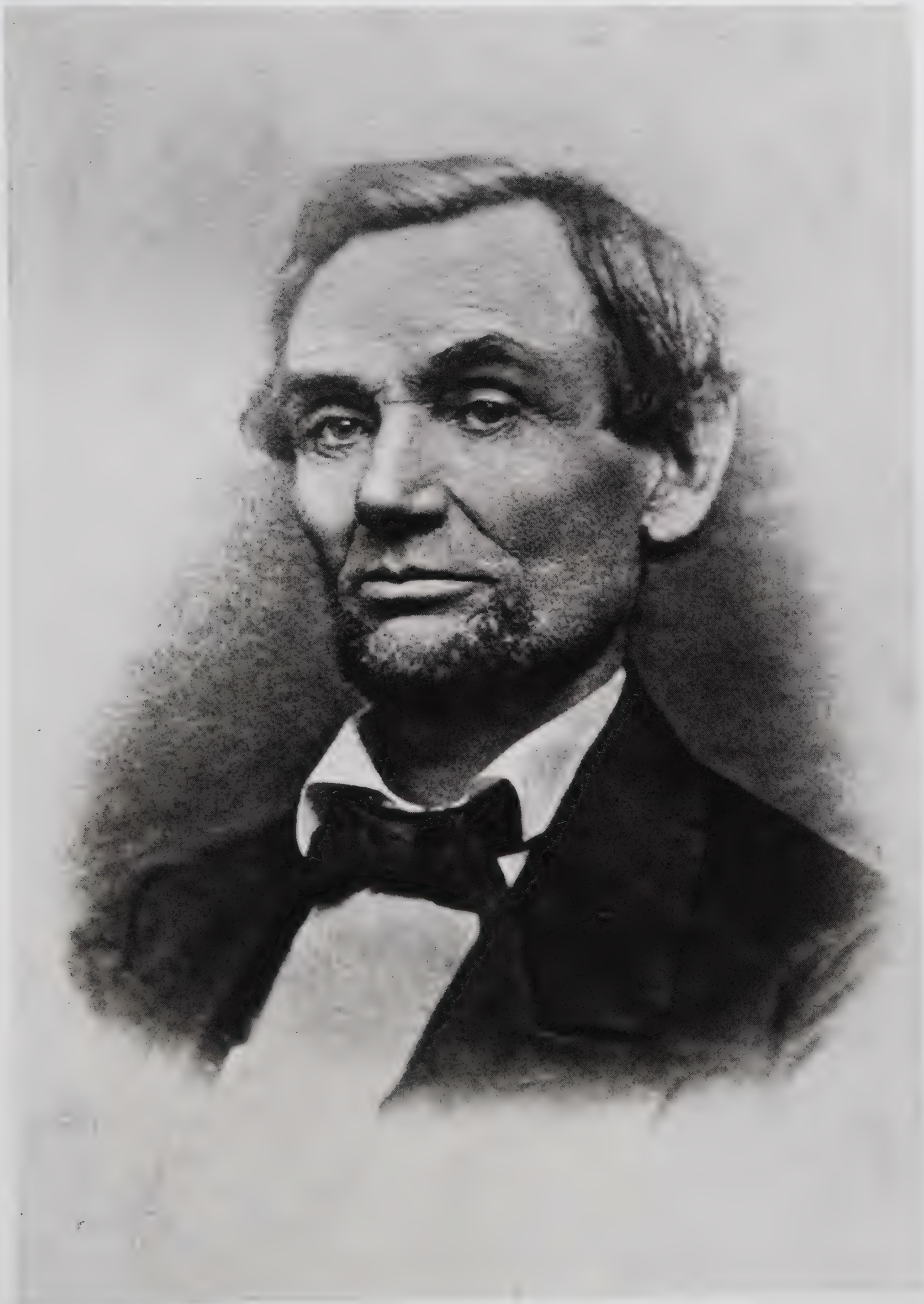


NOVEMBER 25, 1860

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Samuel G. Alschuler

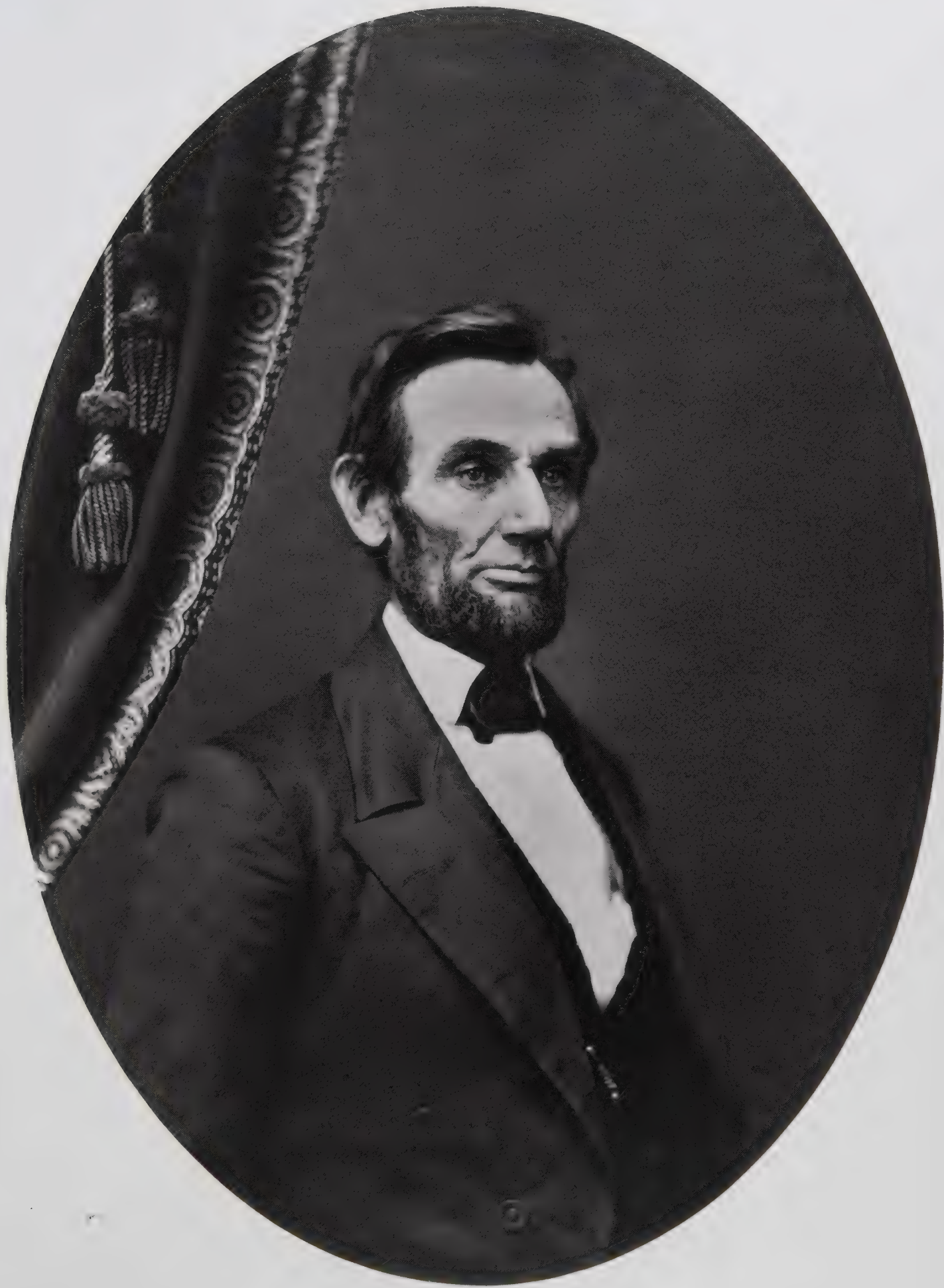


PROBABLY JANUARY 13, 1861  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Christopher S. German

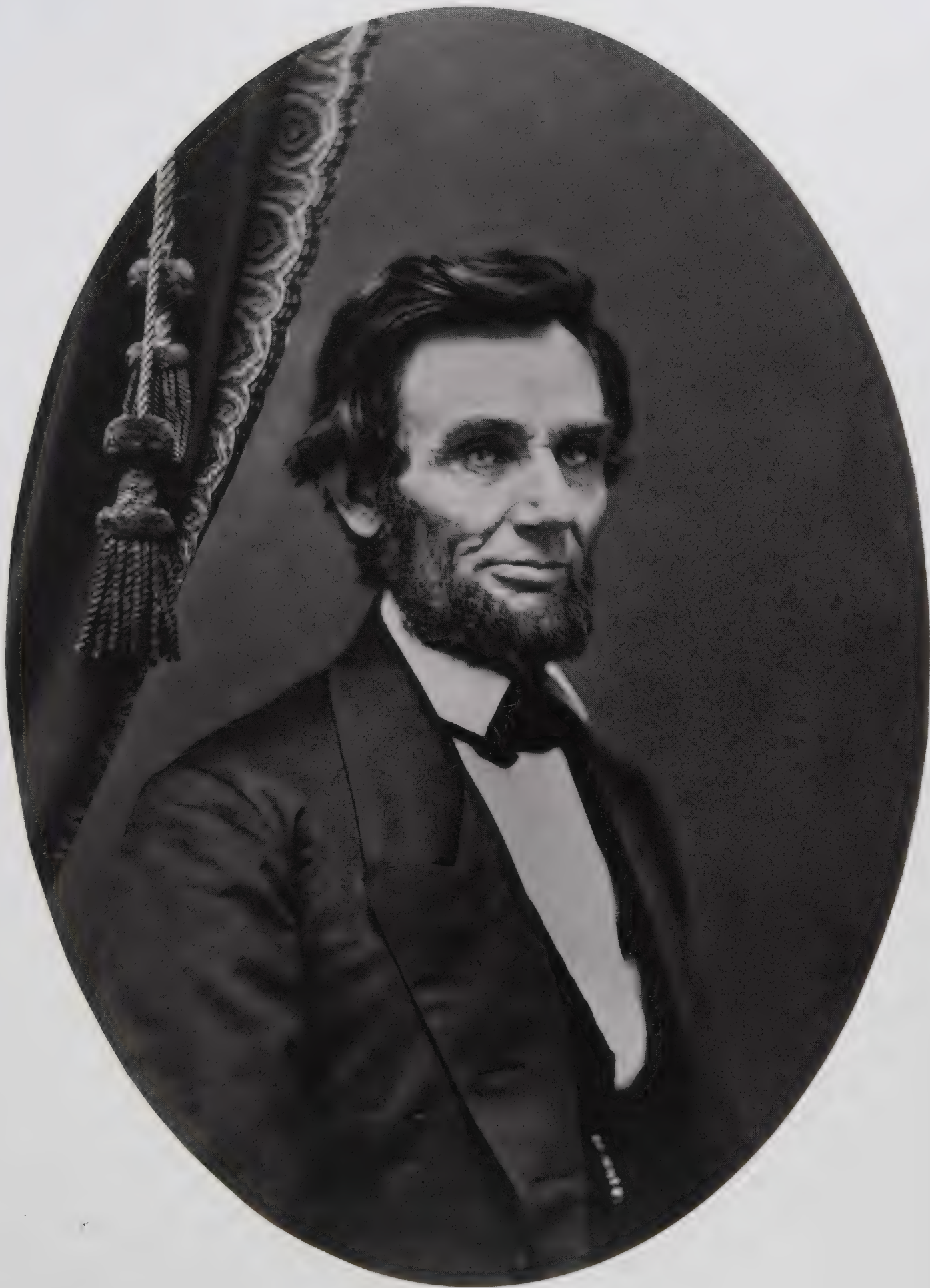




FEBRUARY 9, 1861  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Christopher S. German





FEBRUARY 9, 1861  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

•

Photograph by Christopher S. German

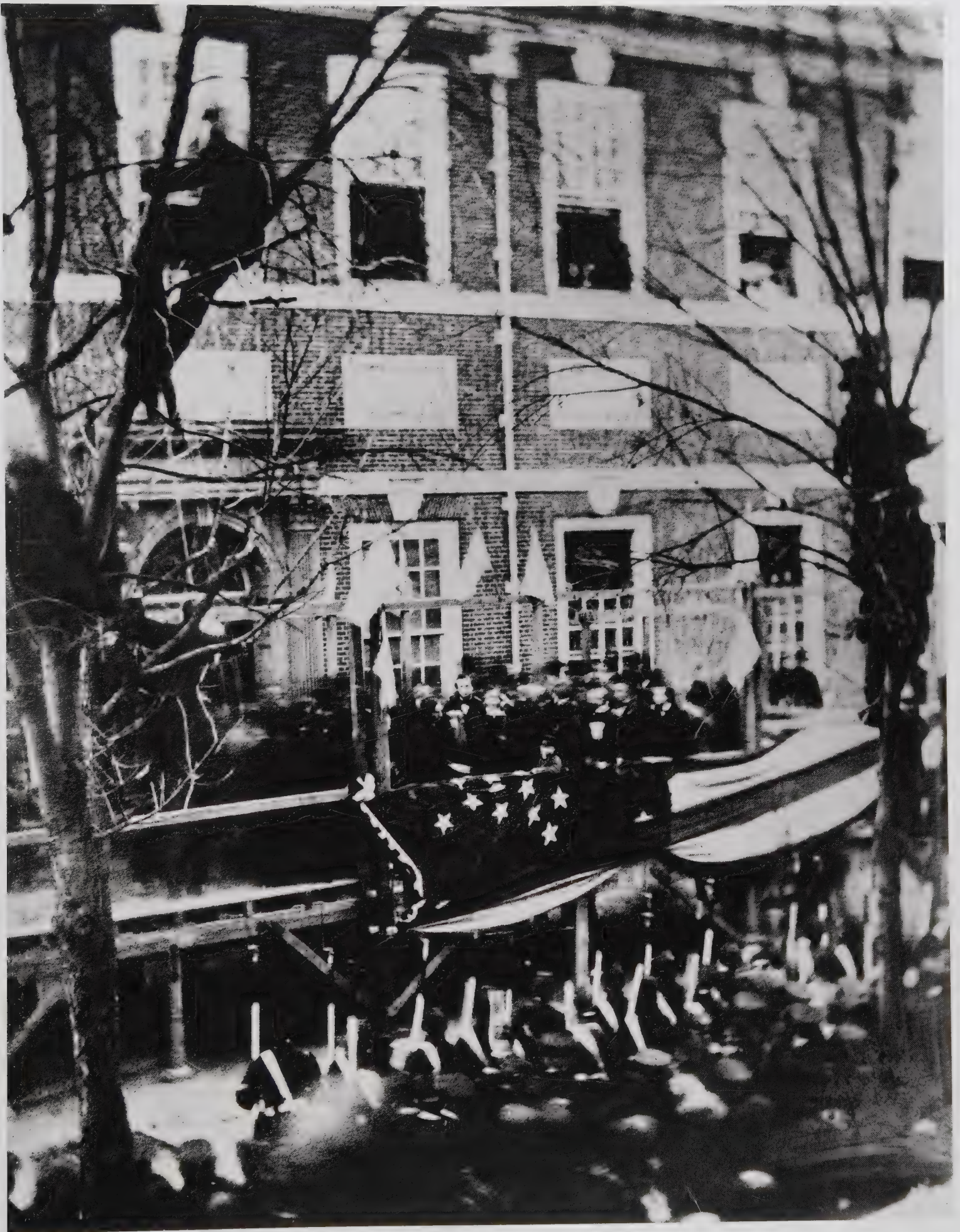


FEBRUARY 22, 1861  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

•

Photograph by Frederick DeBourg Richards





FEBRUARY 22, 1861  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

•

Photograph by Frederick DeBourg Richards



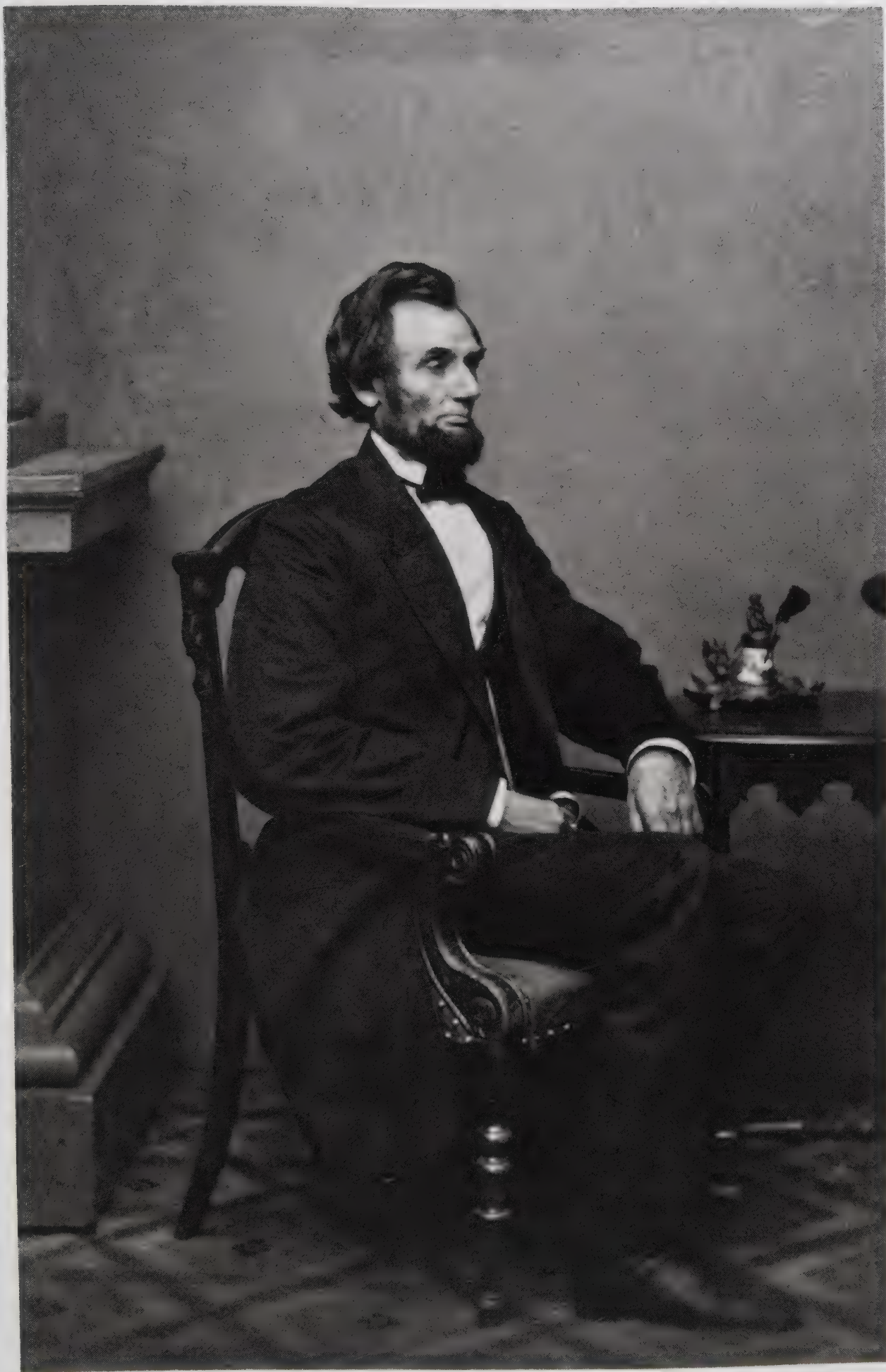




PROBABLY FEBRUARY 24, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



PROBABLY FEBRUARY 24, 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





PROBABLY FEBRUARY 24, 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





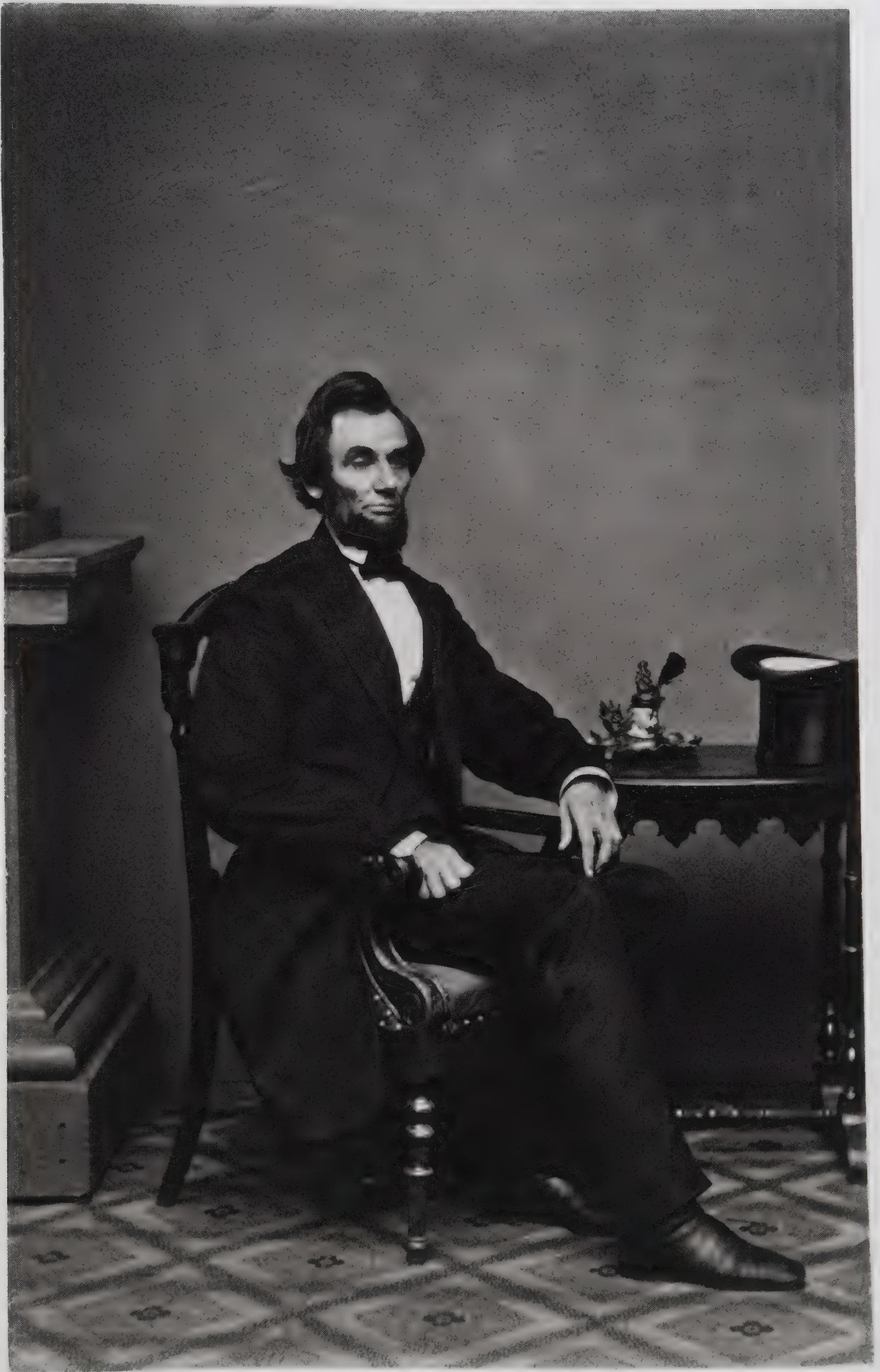


PROBABLY FEBRUARY 24, 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



PROBABLY FEBRUARY 24, 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





MARCH 4, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Unknown photographer





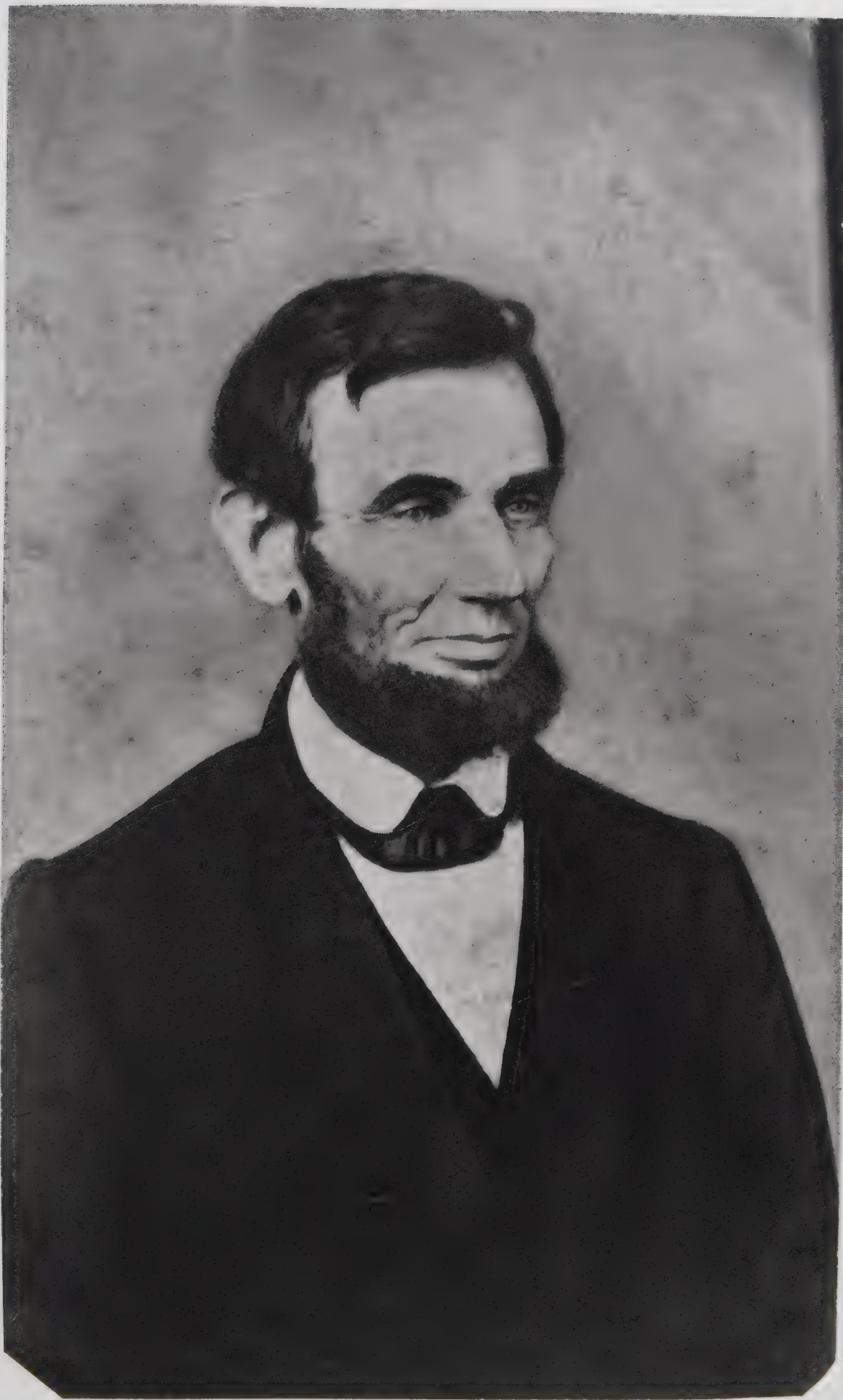


CIRCA SPRING 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph possibly by C. D. Fredericks,  
James E. McClee, or W. L. German



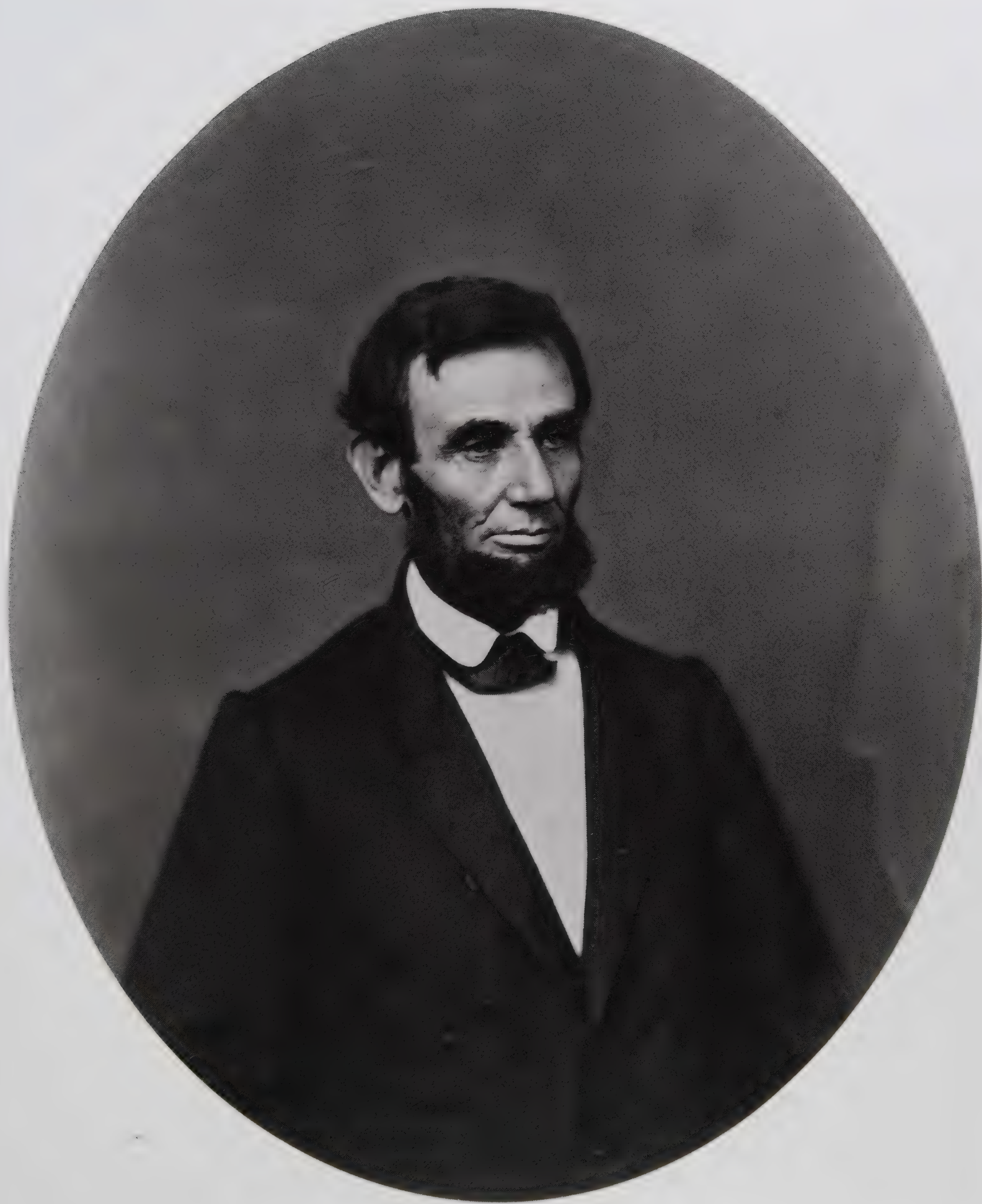
CIRCA SPRING 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph possibly by C. D. Fredericks,  
James E. McClee, or W. L. German





MAY 16, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator  
for Mathew B. Brady

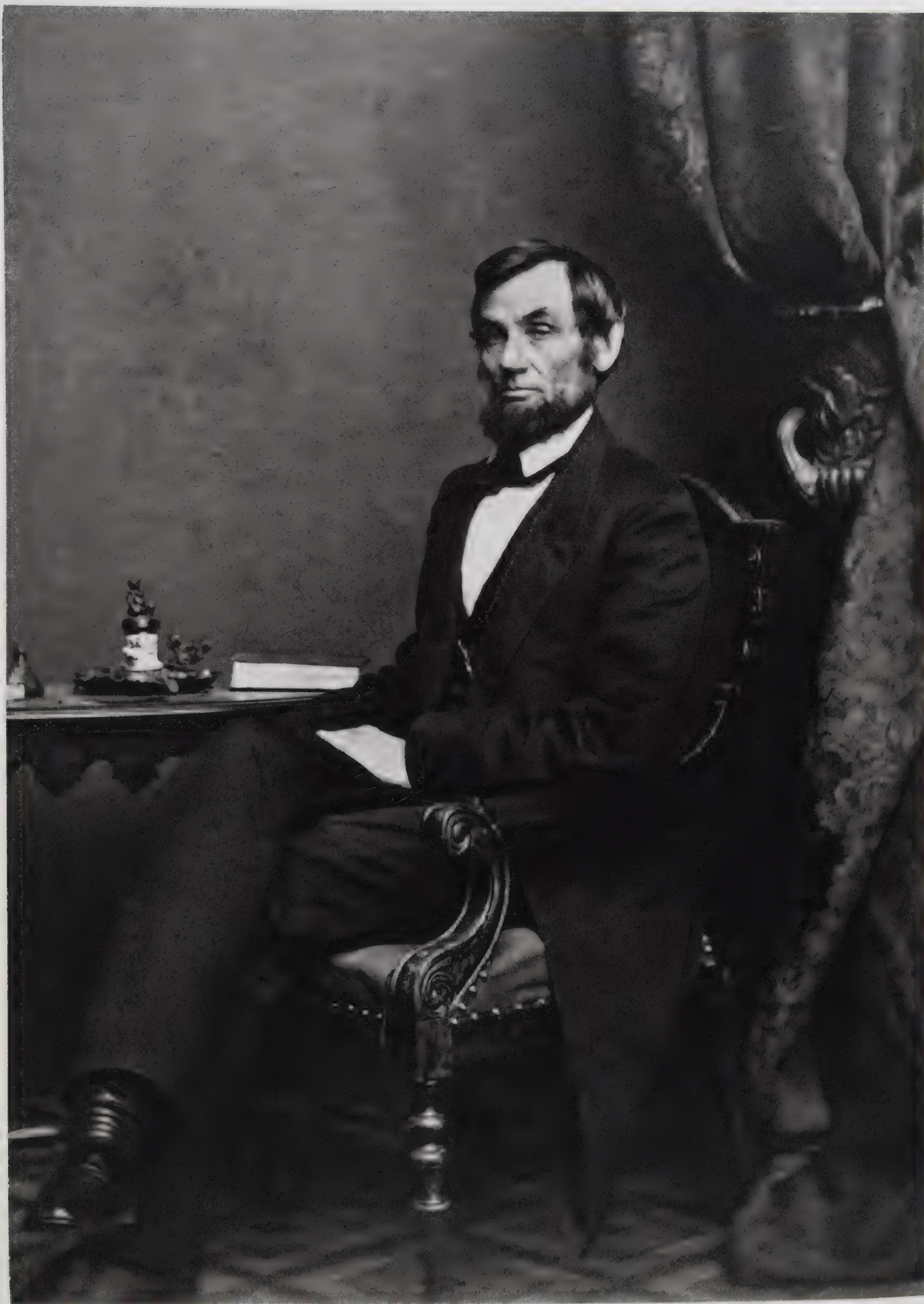




MAY 16, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator for  
Mathew B. Brady

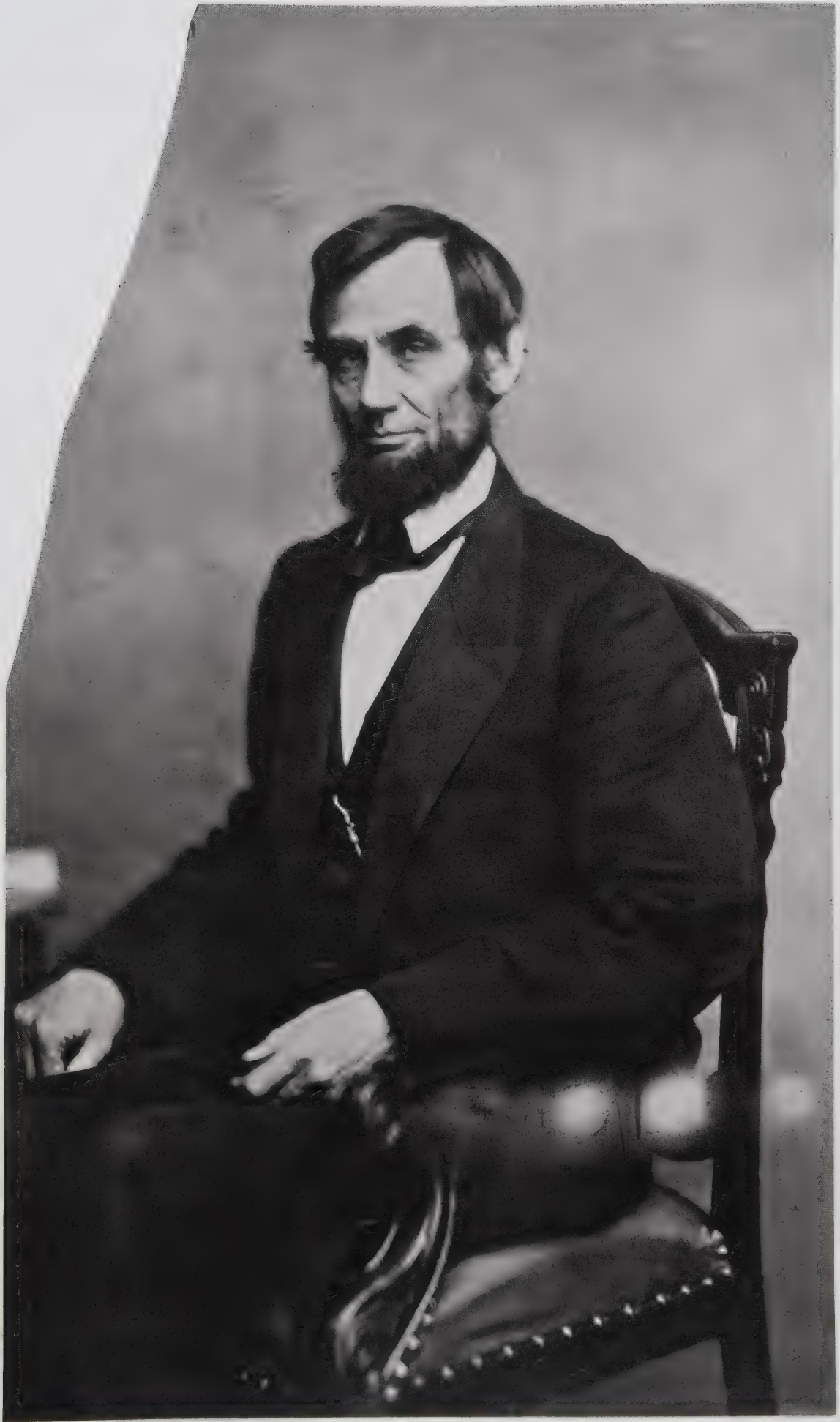


MAY 16, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator for  
Mathew B. Brady

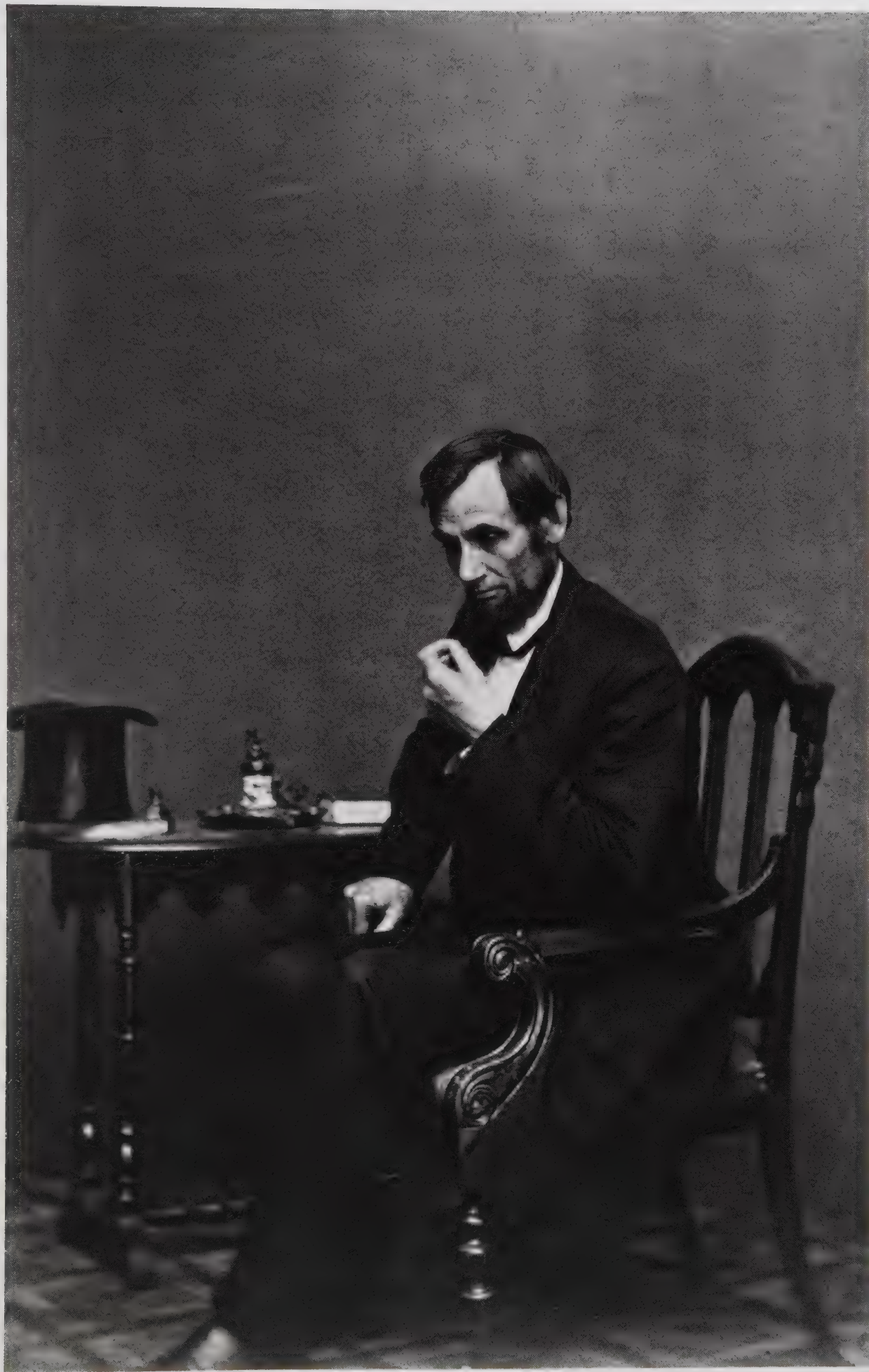




MAY 16, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator for  
Mathew B. Brady

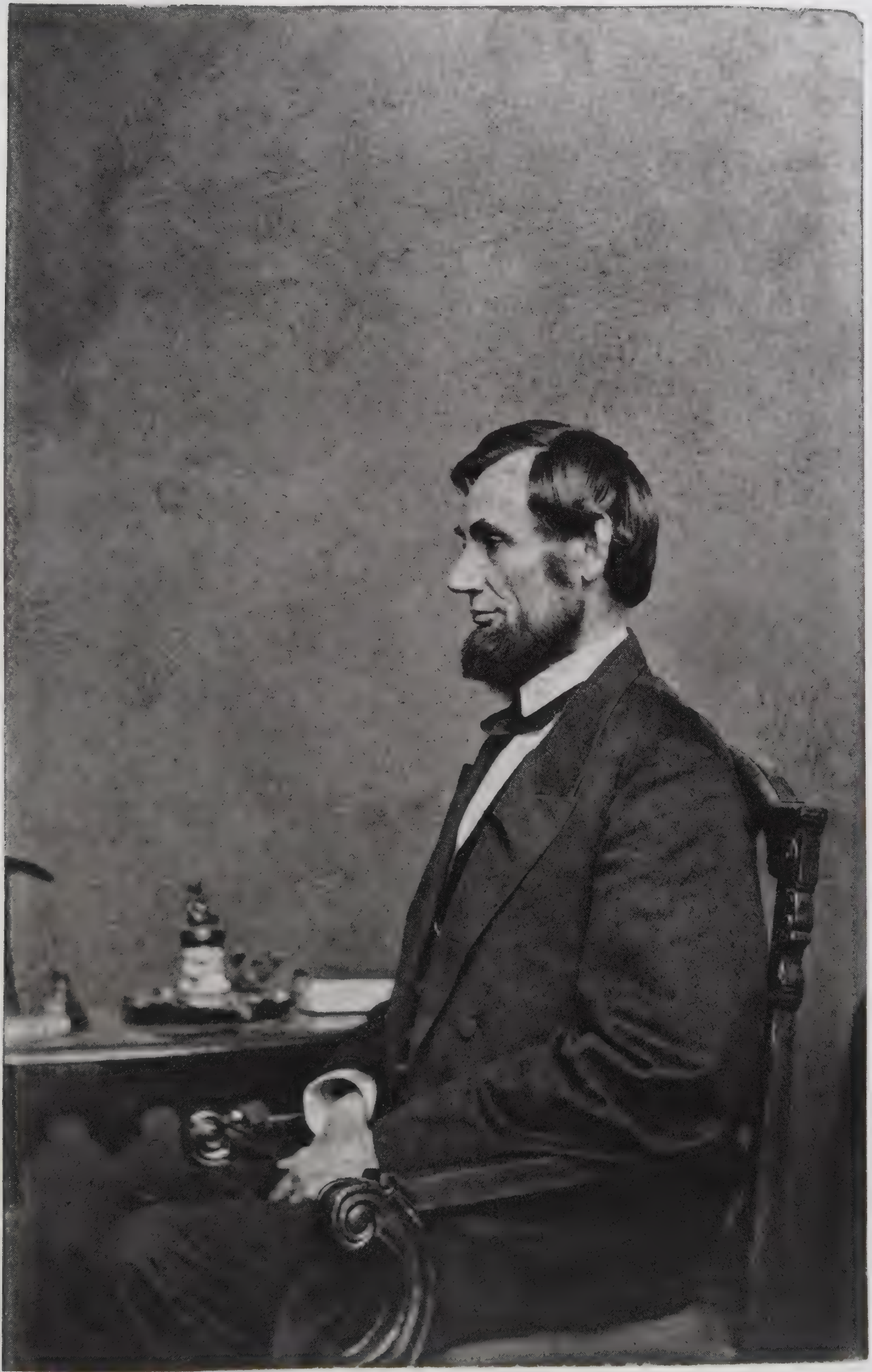




MAY 16, 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator for  
Mathew B. Brady



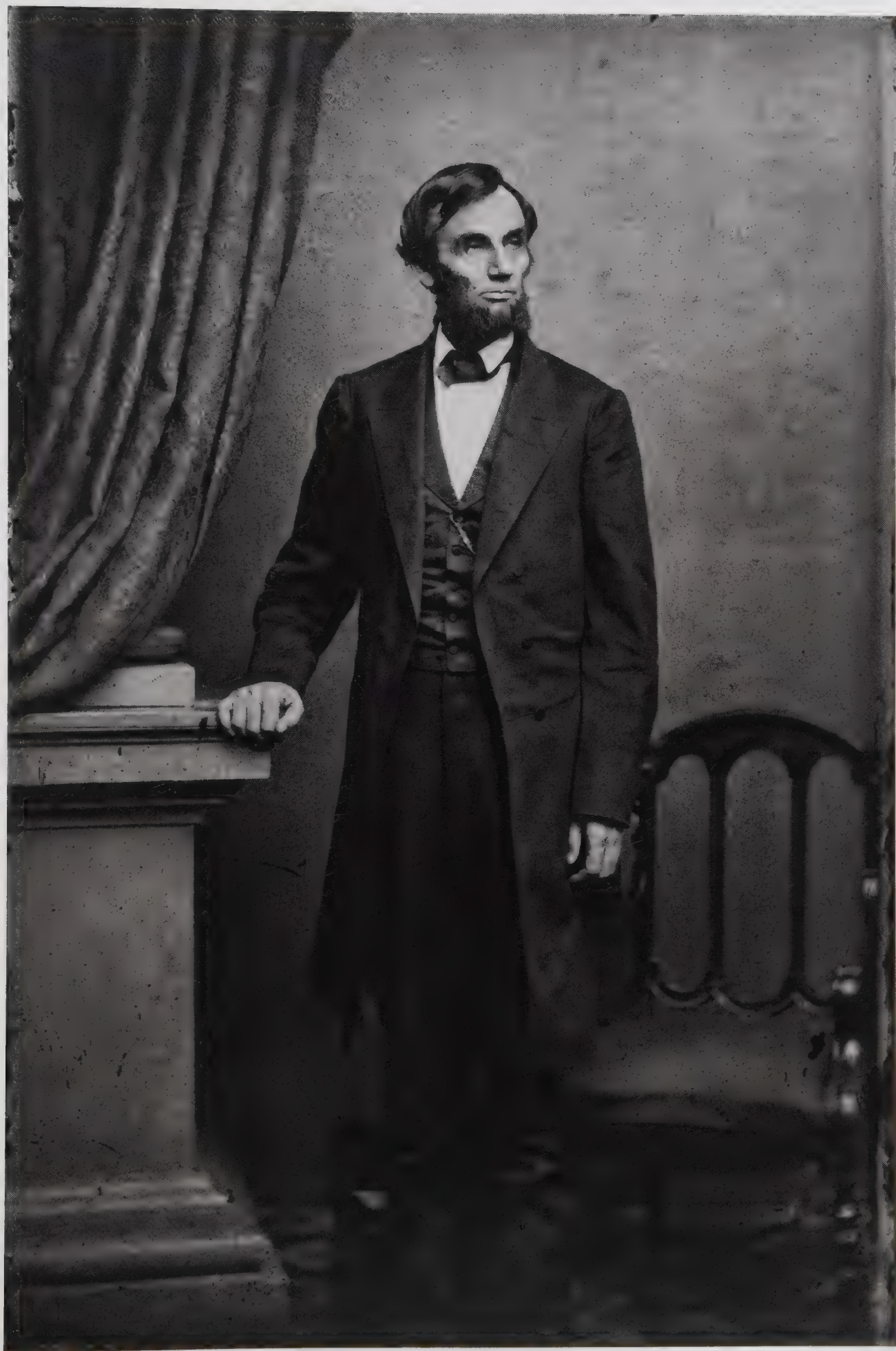
PROBABLY MAY 16, 1861

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown operator for  
Mathew B. Brady

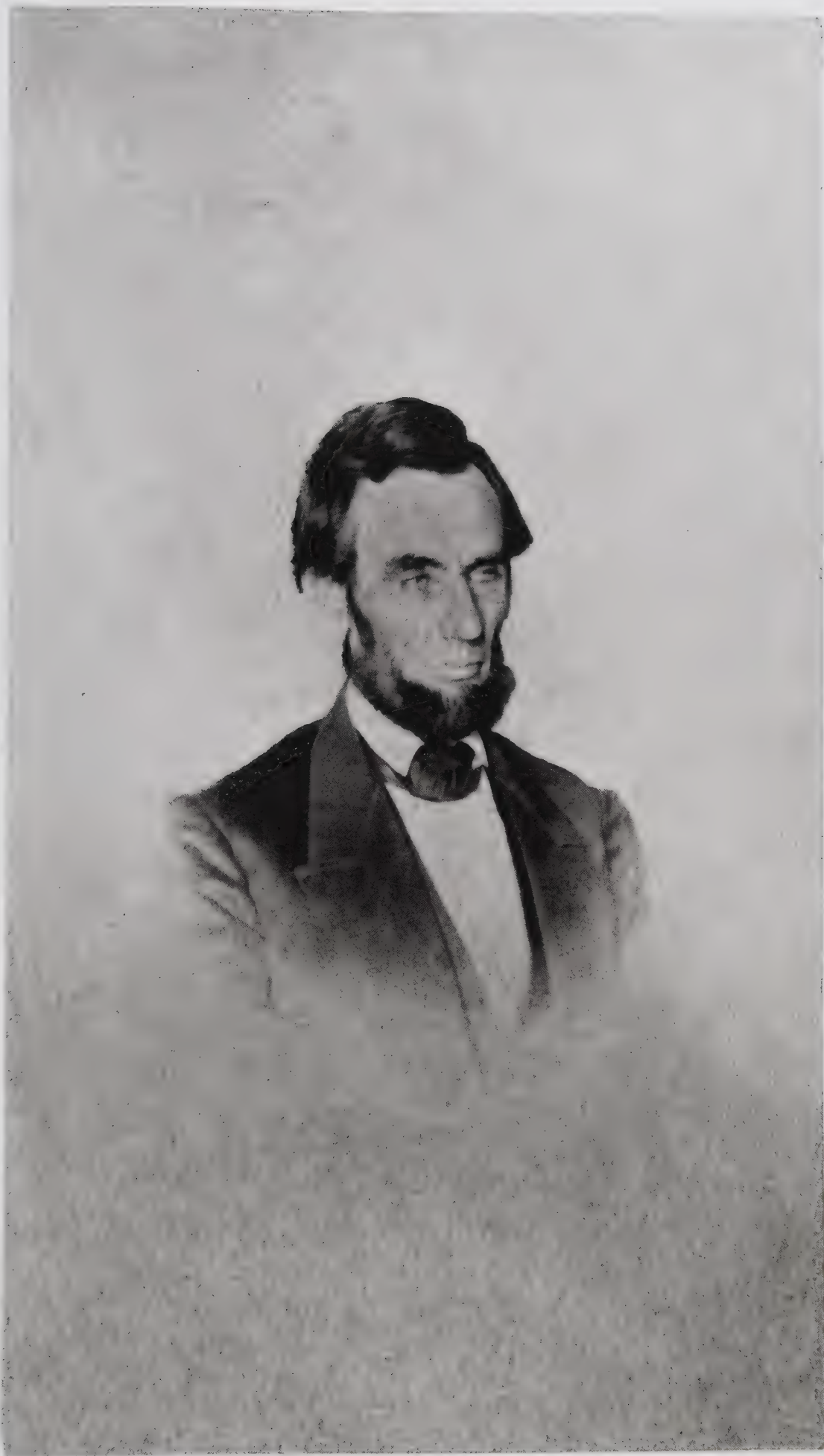




CIRCA SEPTEMBER 1861  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph possibly by Edward Bierstadt





OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner

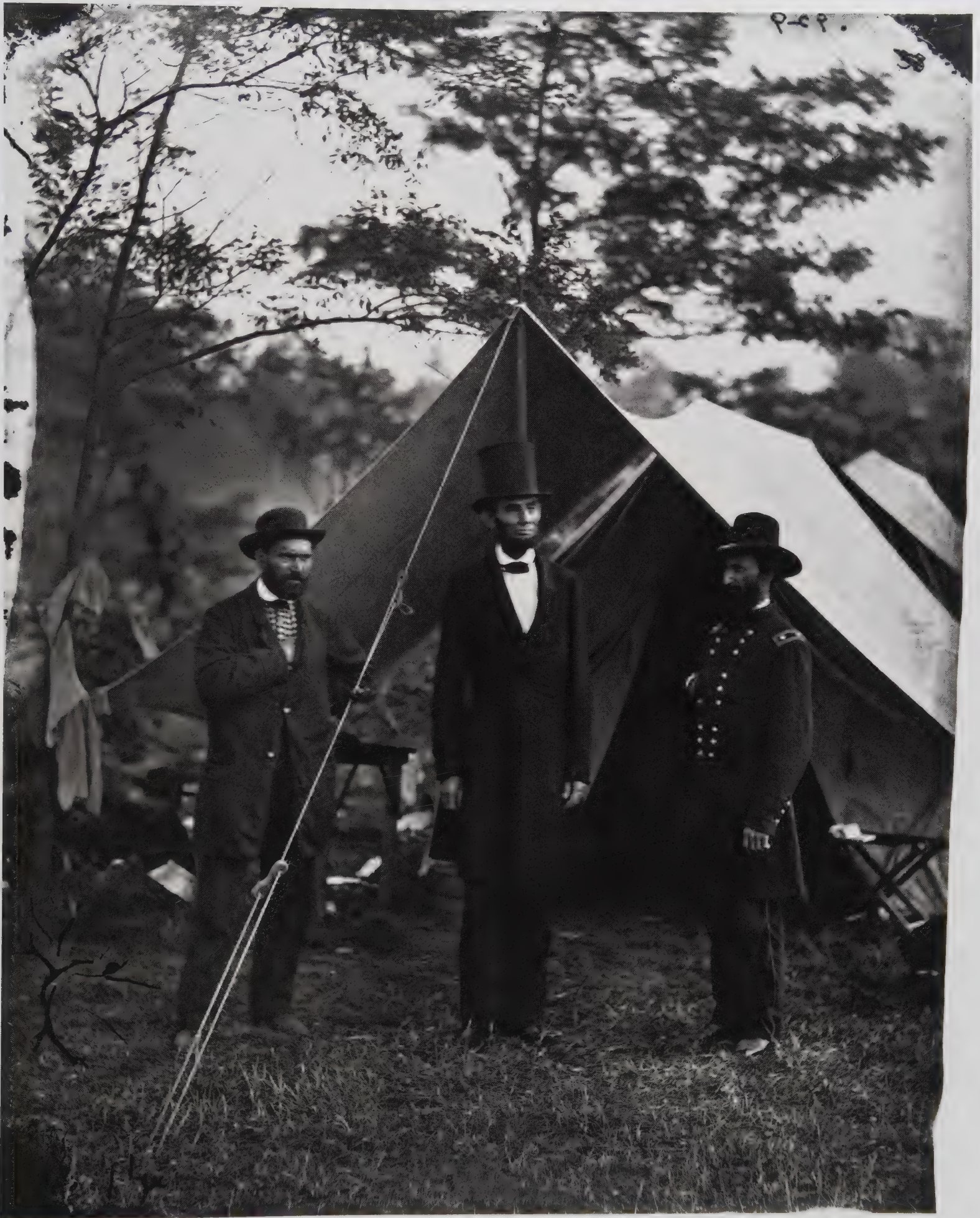


OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



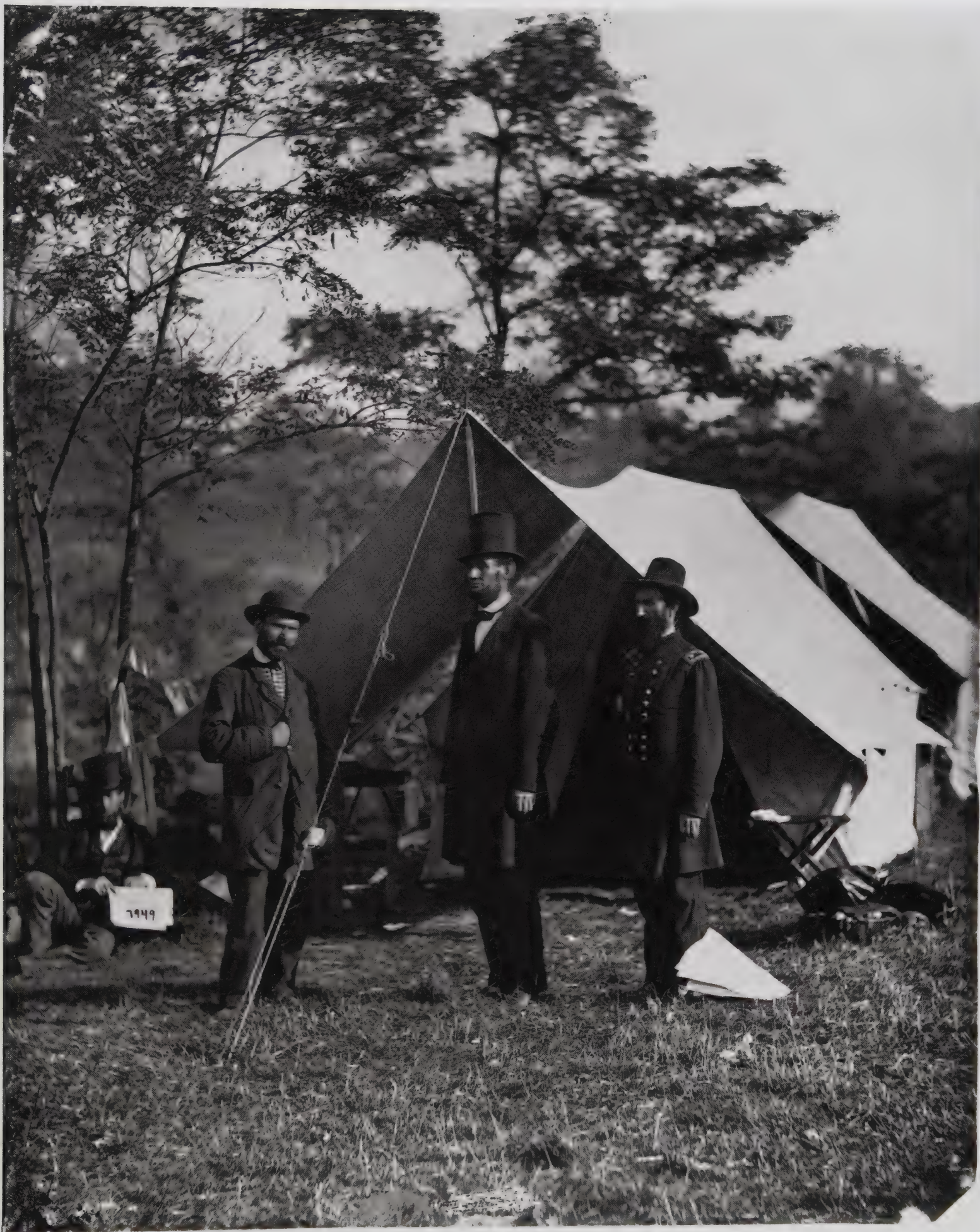


OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner







OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





OCTOBER 3, 1862  
ANTIETAM, MARYLAND

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner







AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner

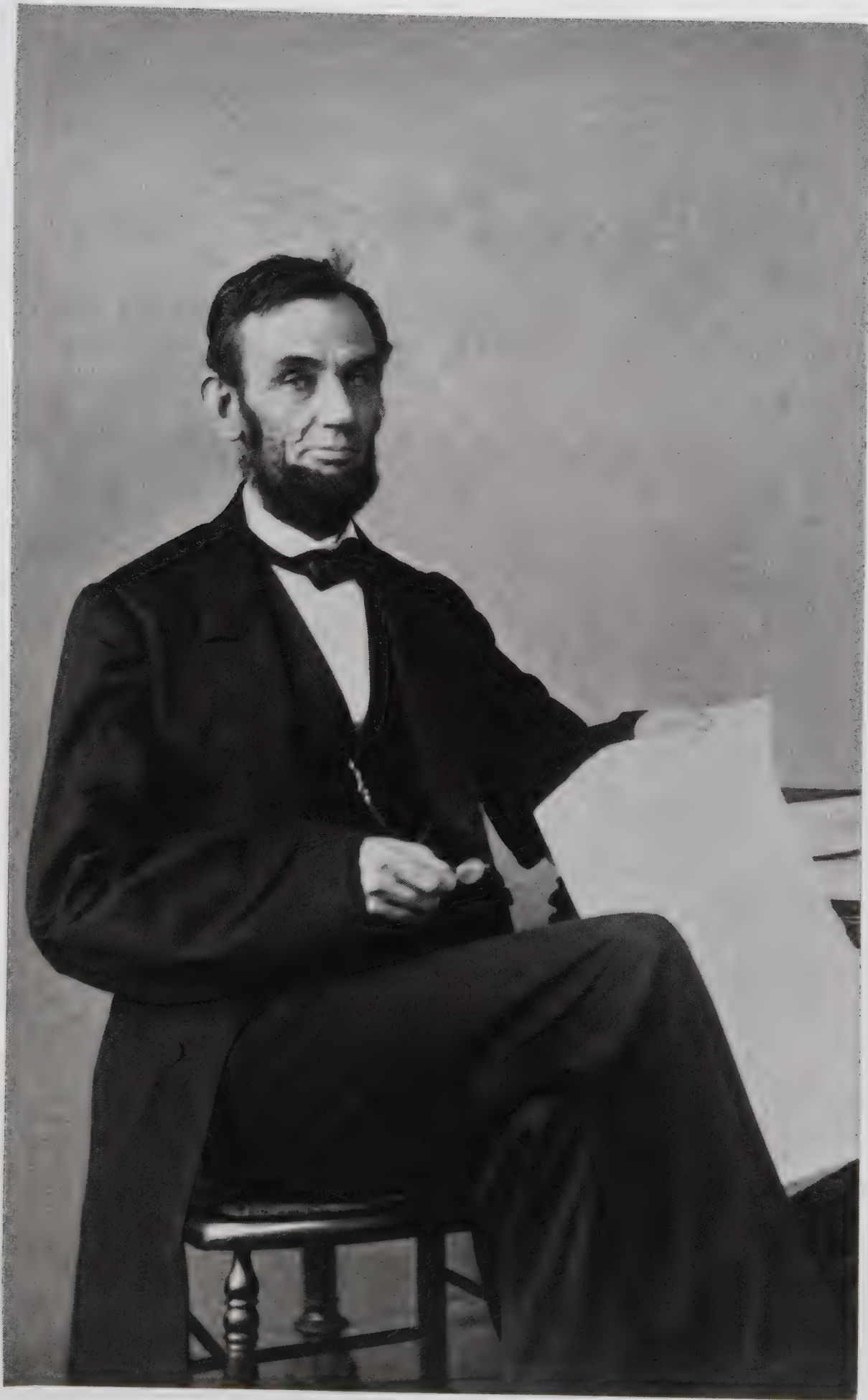




AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





AUGUST 9, 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



NOVEMBER 8, 1863

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





NOVEMBER 8, 1863

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





NOVEMBER 8, 1863

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



NOVEMBER 8, 1863

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





NOVEMBER 8, 1863

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





NOVEMBER 19, 1863  
GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

•

Photograph possibly by David Bachrach

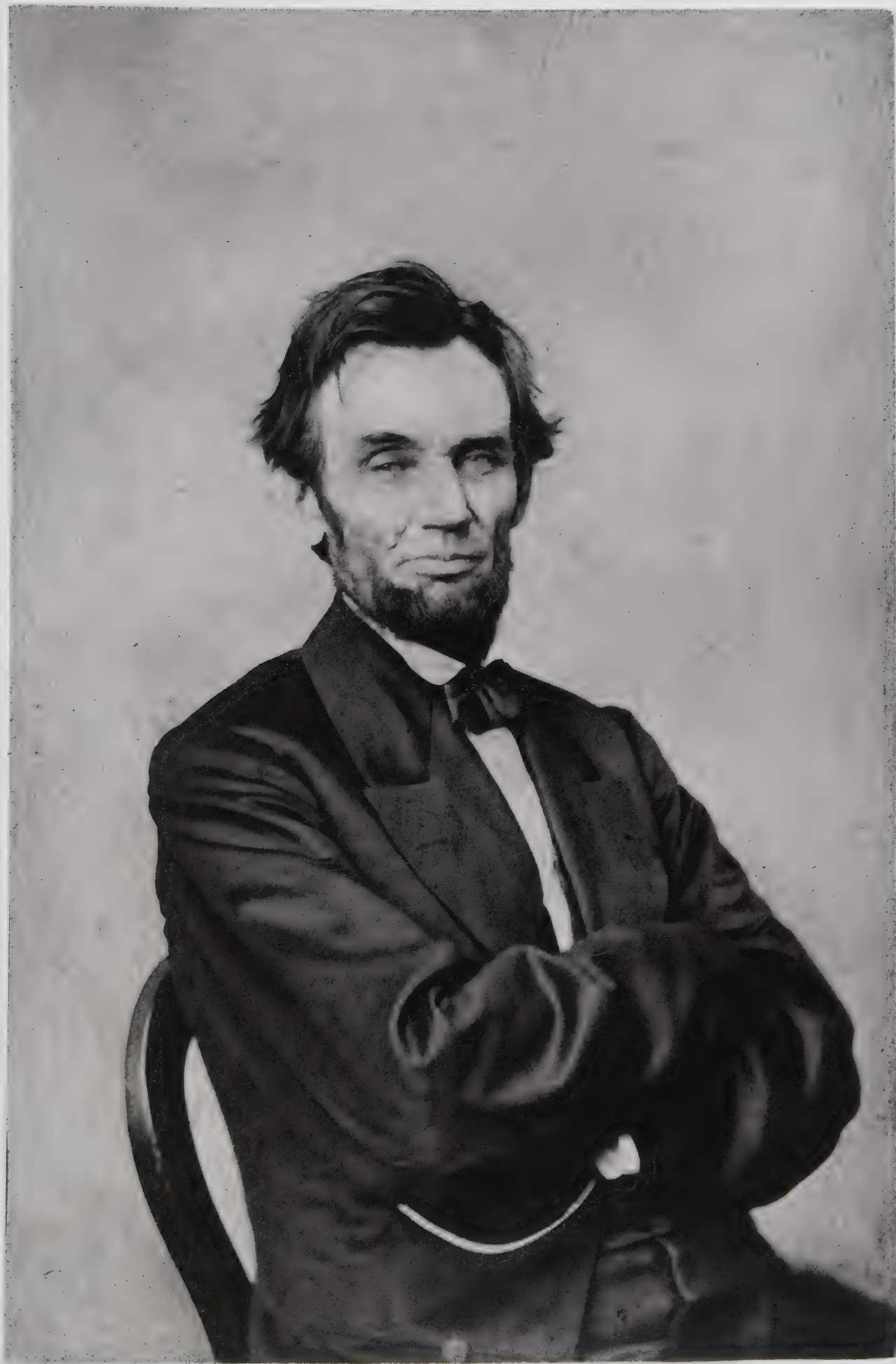


CIRCA 1863  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Lewis Emory Walker

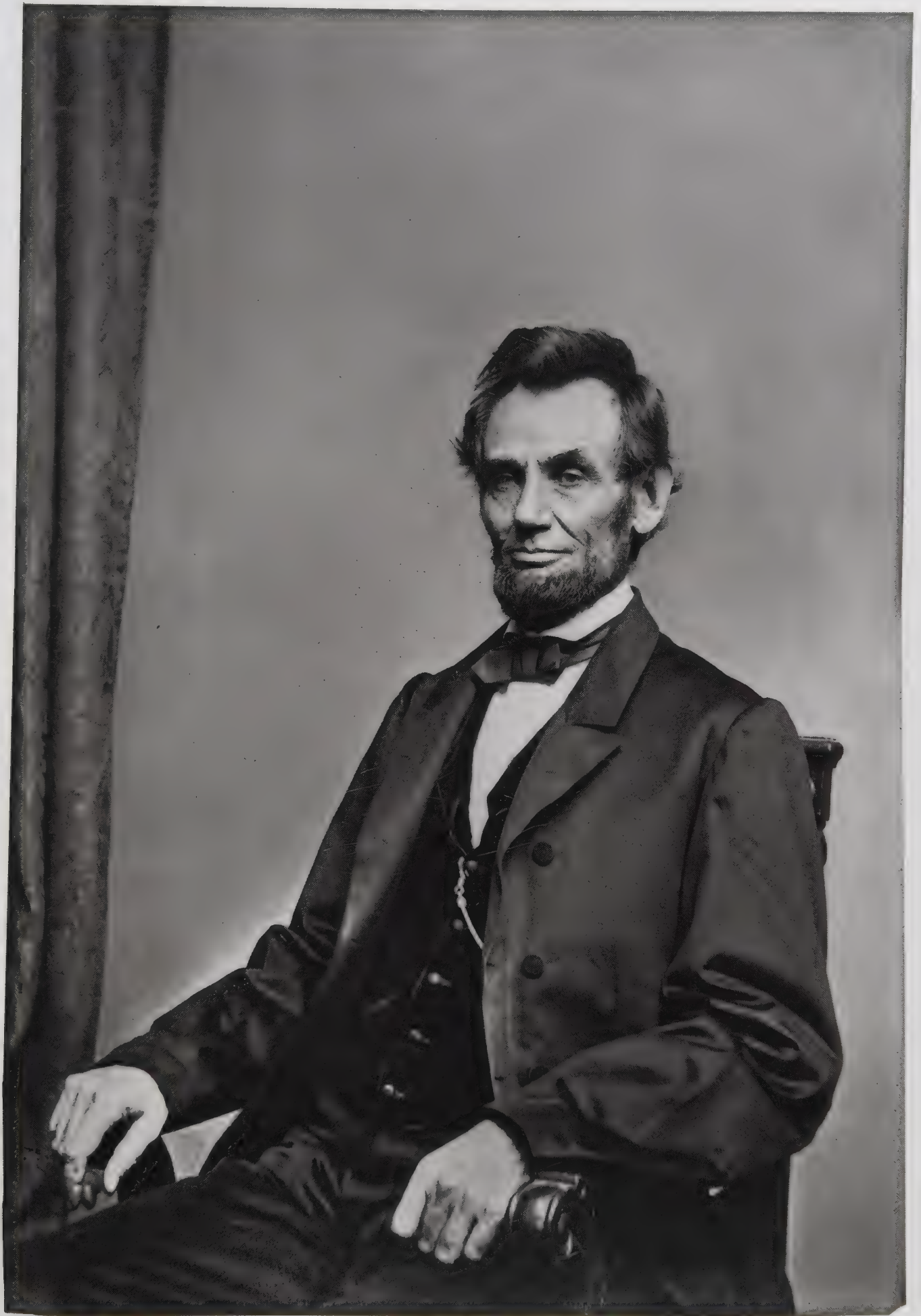




JANUARY 8, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Mathew B. Brady





JANUARY 8, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Mathew B. Brady



JANUARY 8, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Mathew B. Brady





JANUARY 8, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

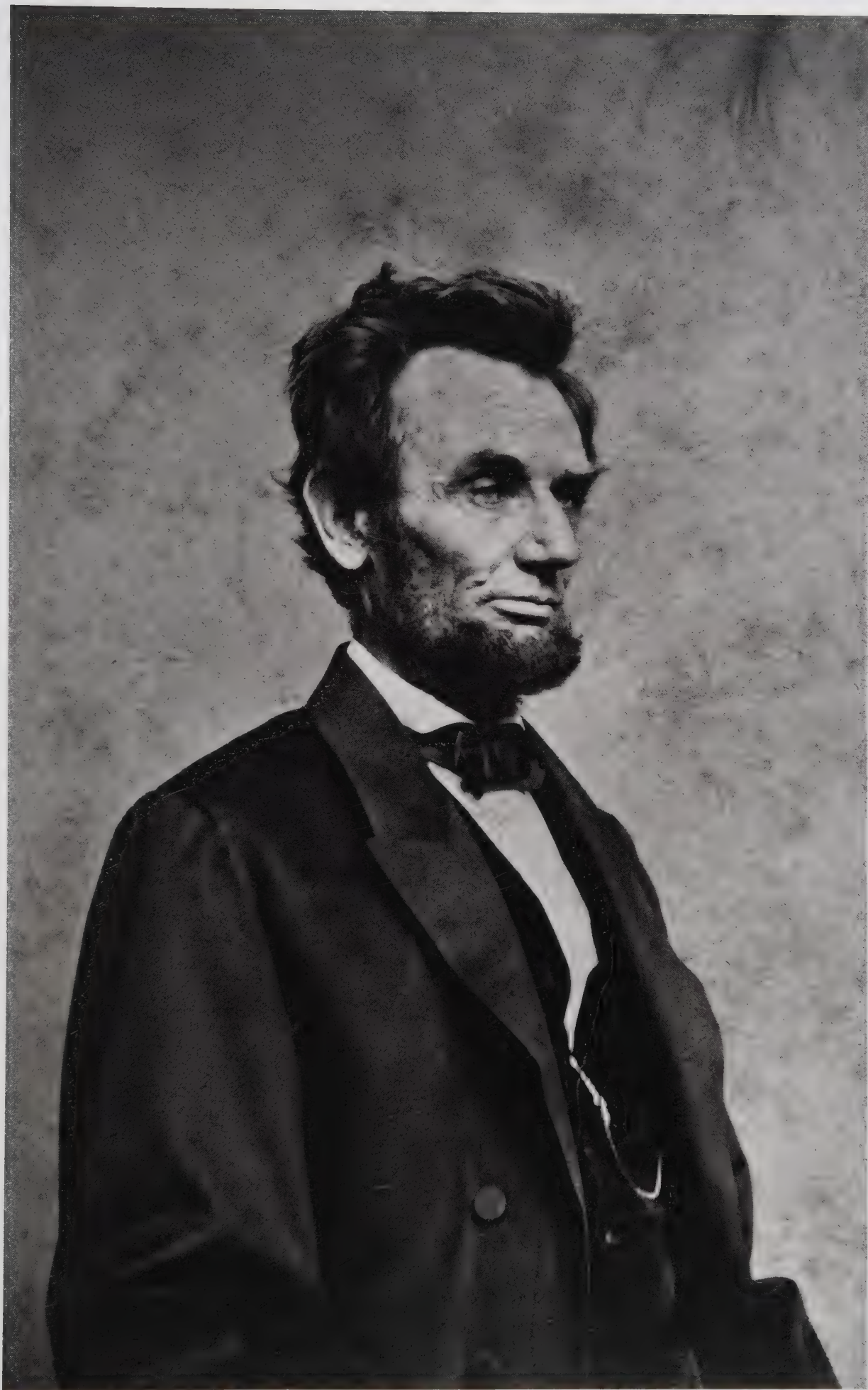
Photograph by Mathew B. Brady





JANUARY 8, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•  
Photograph by Mathew B. Brady

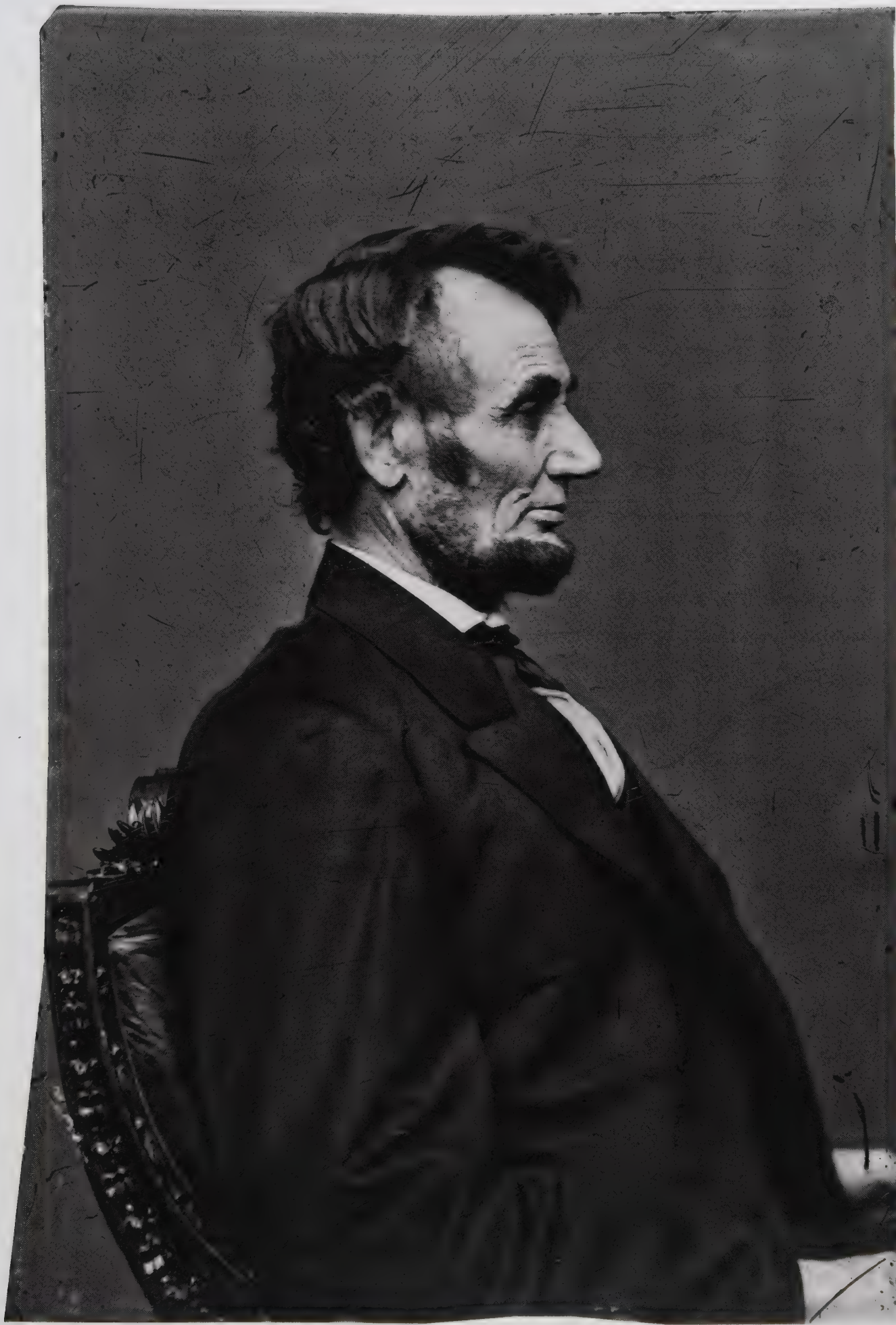


FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger



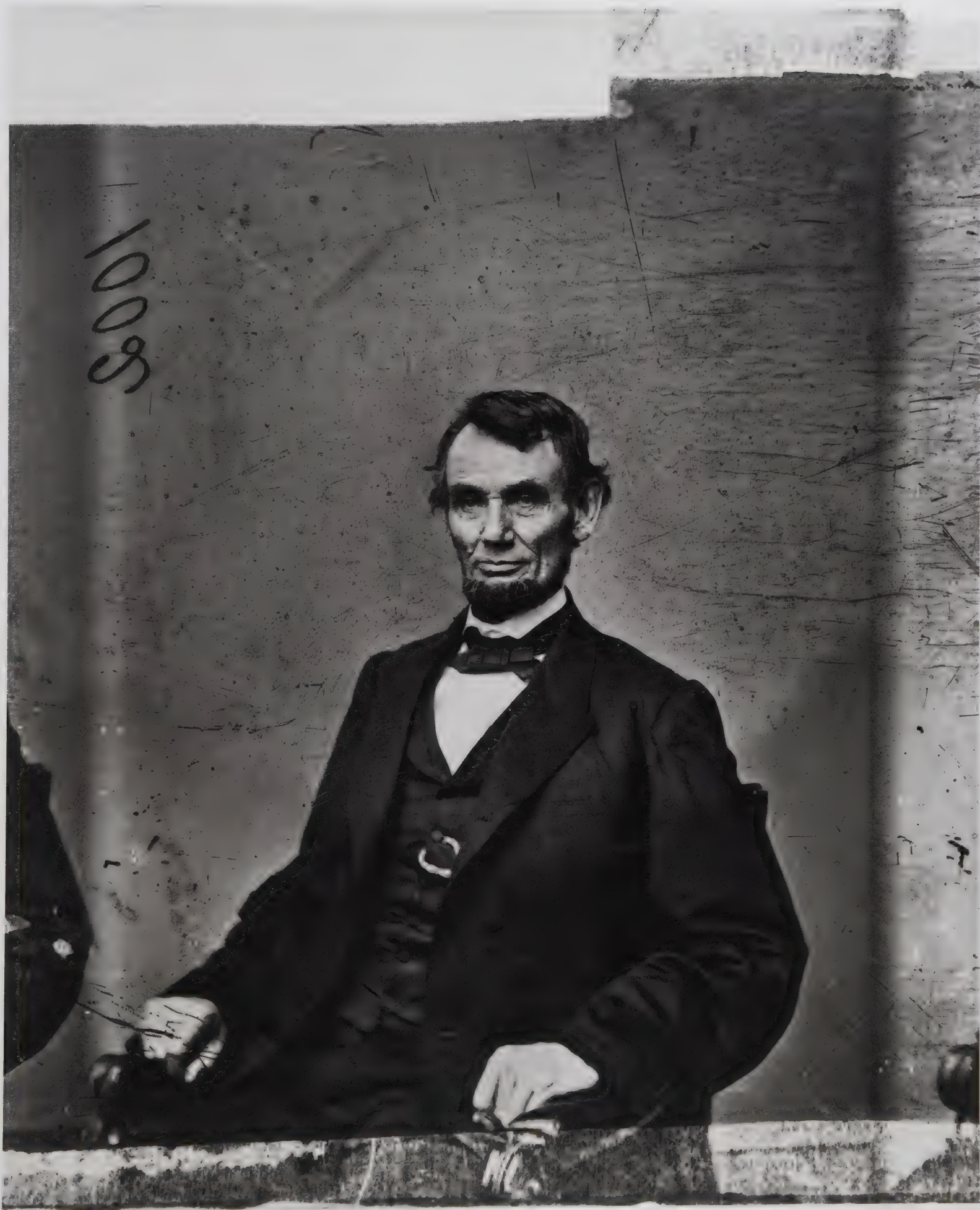


FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger



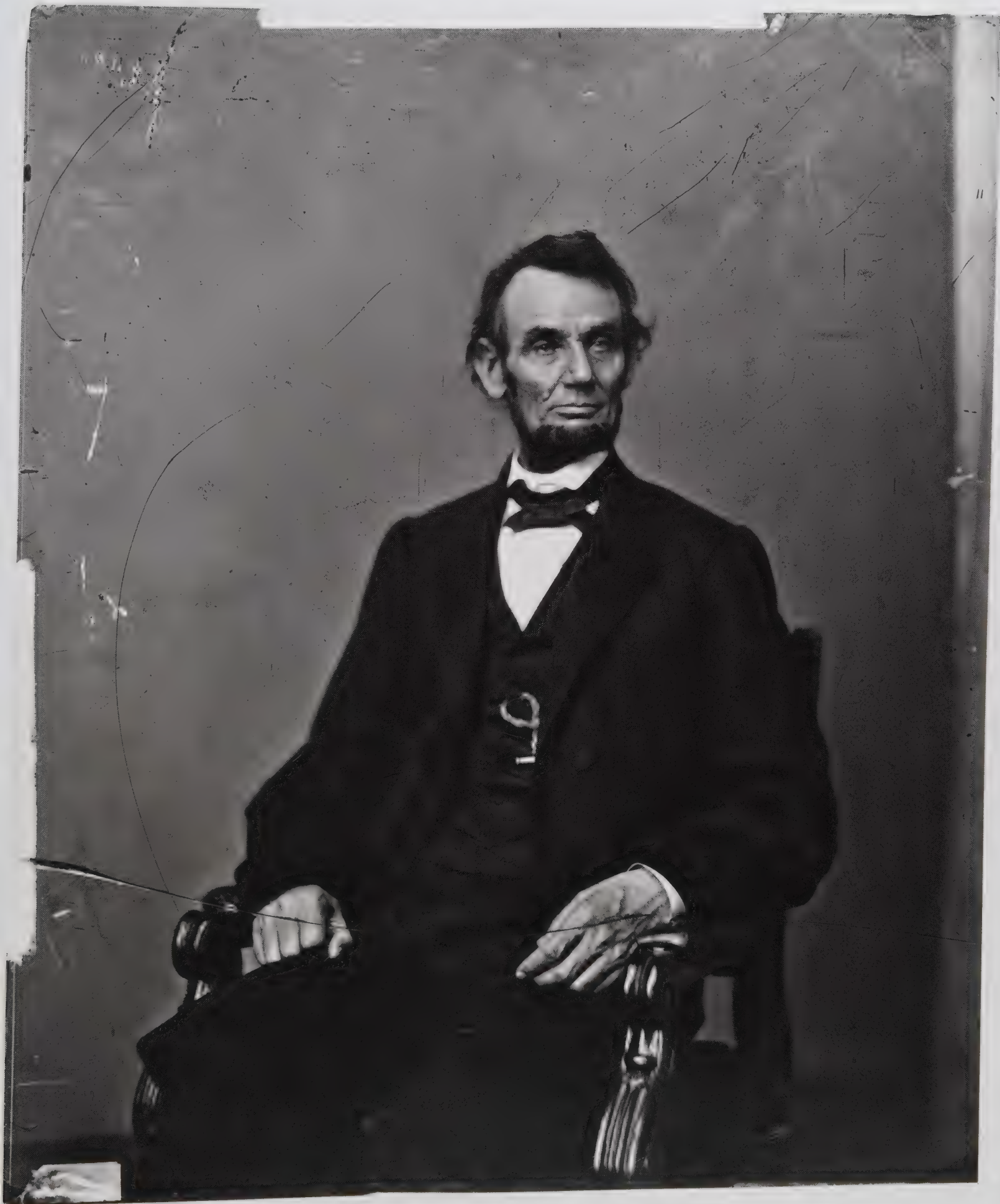




FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger

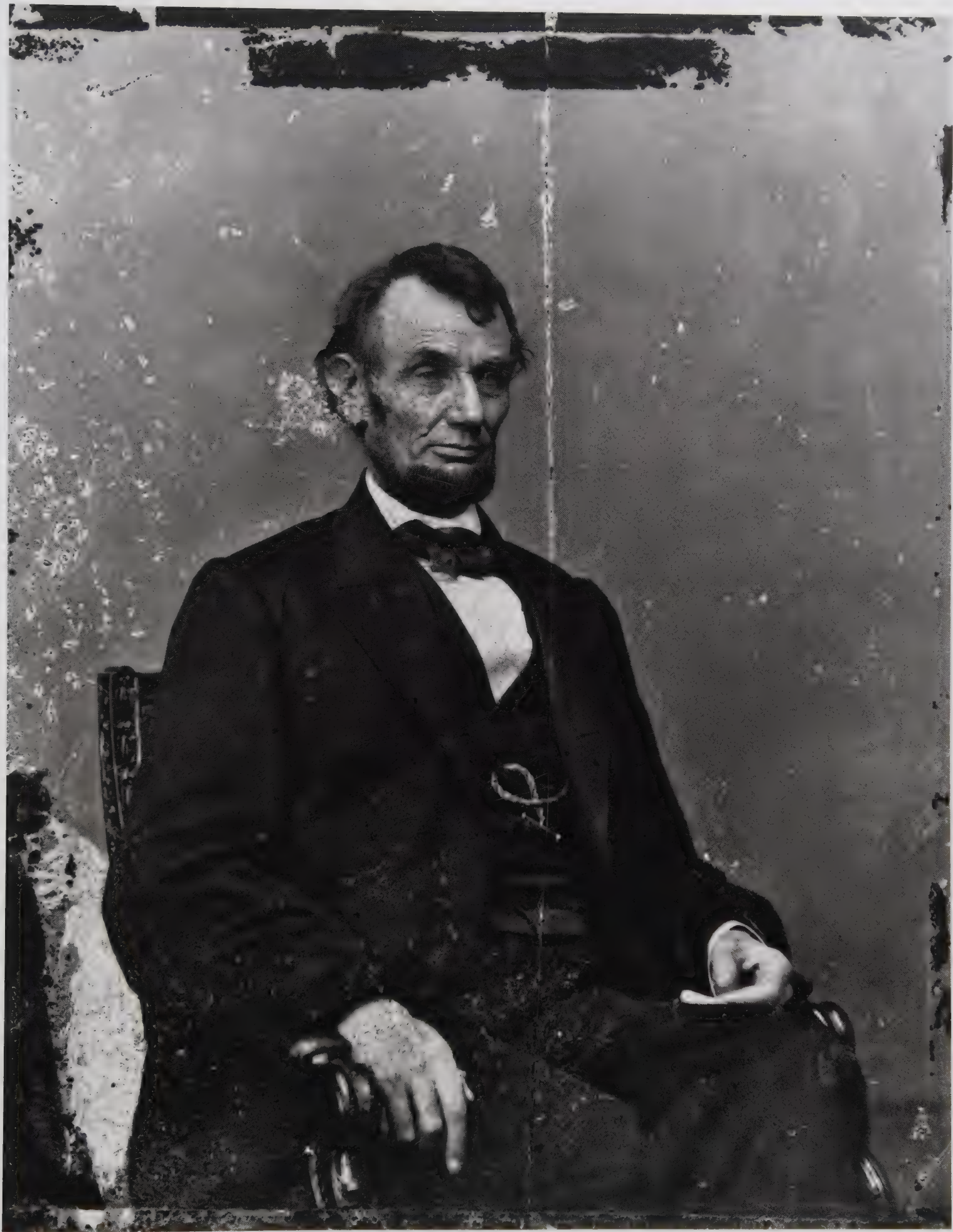


FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger





FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger





FEBRUARY 9, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger



CIRCA 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown  
operator for Wenderoth & Taylor

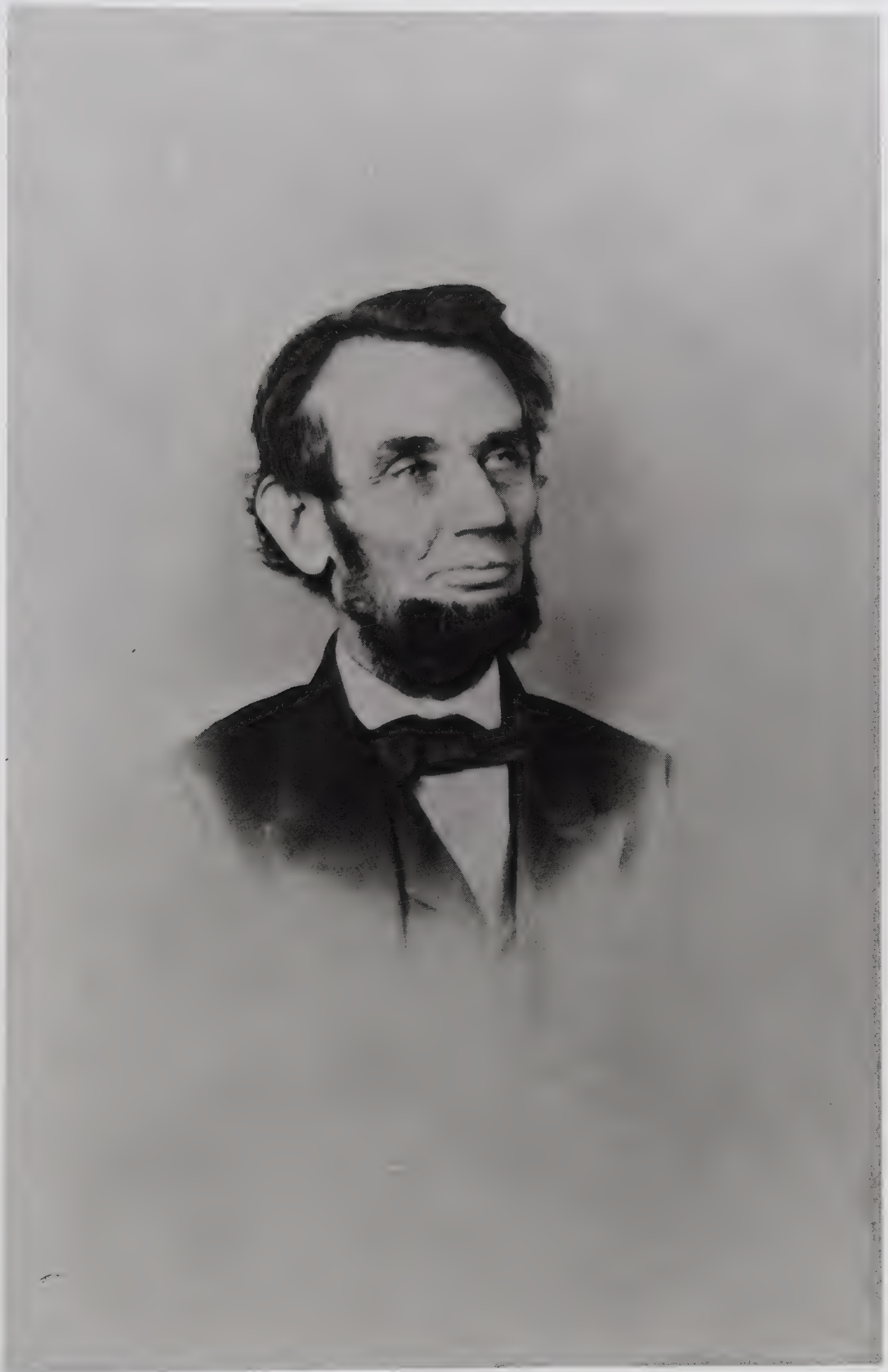




CIRCA 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by unknown  
operator for Wenderoth & Taylor

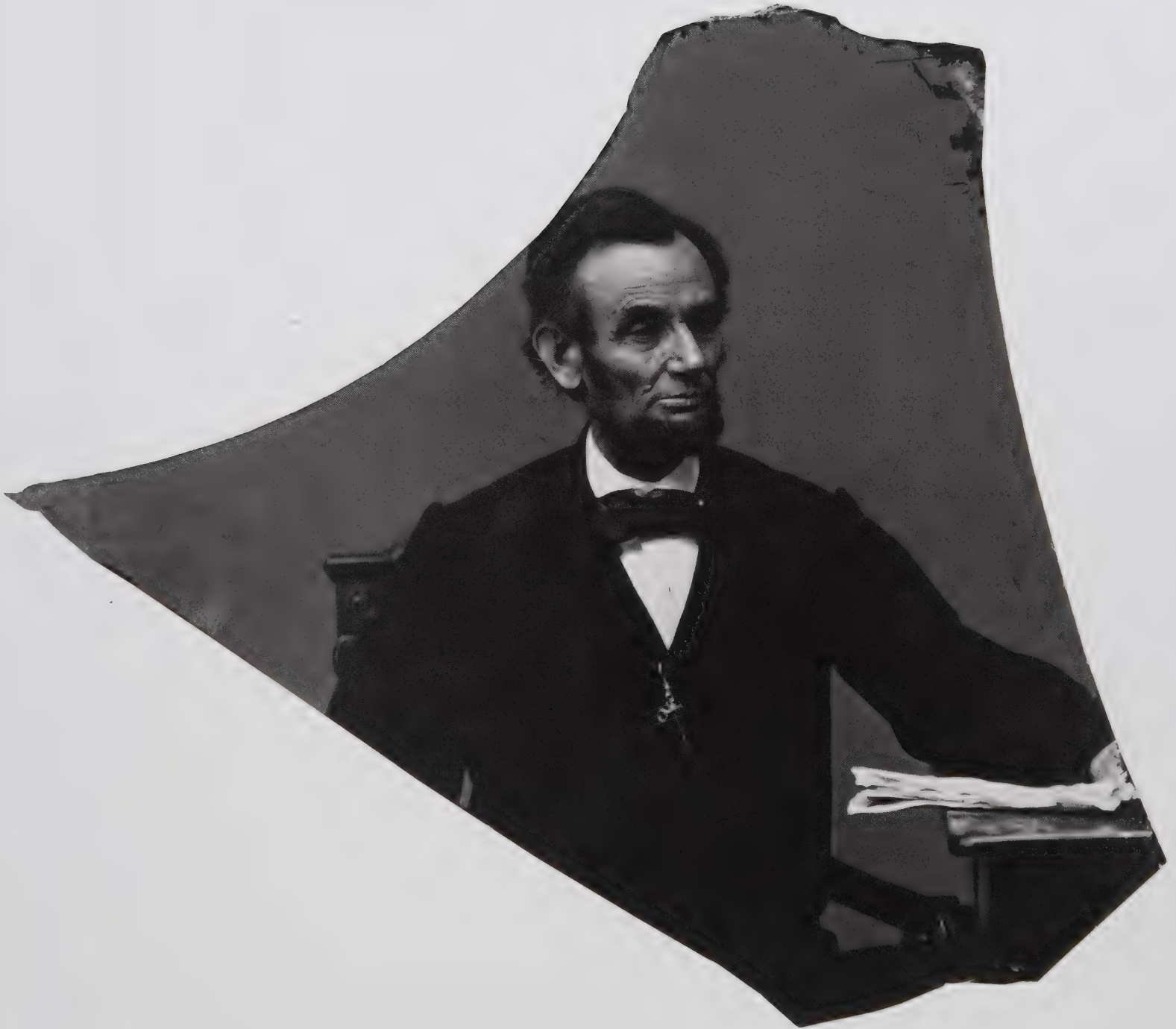




APRIL 20, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger

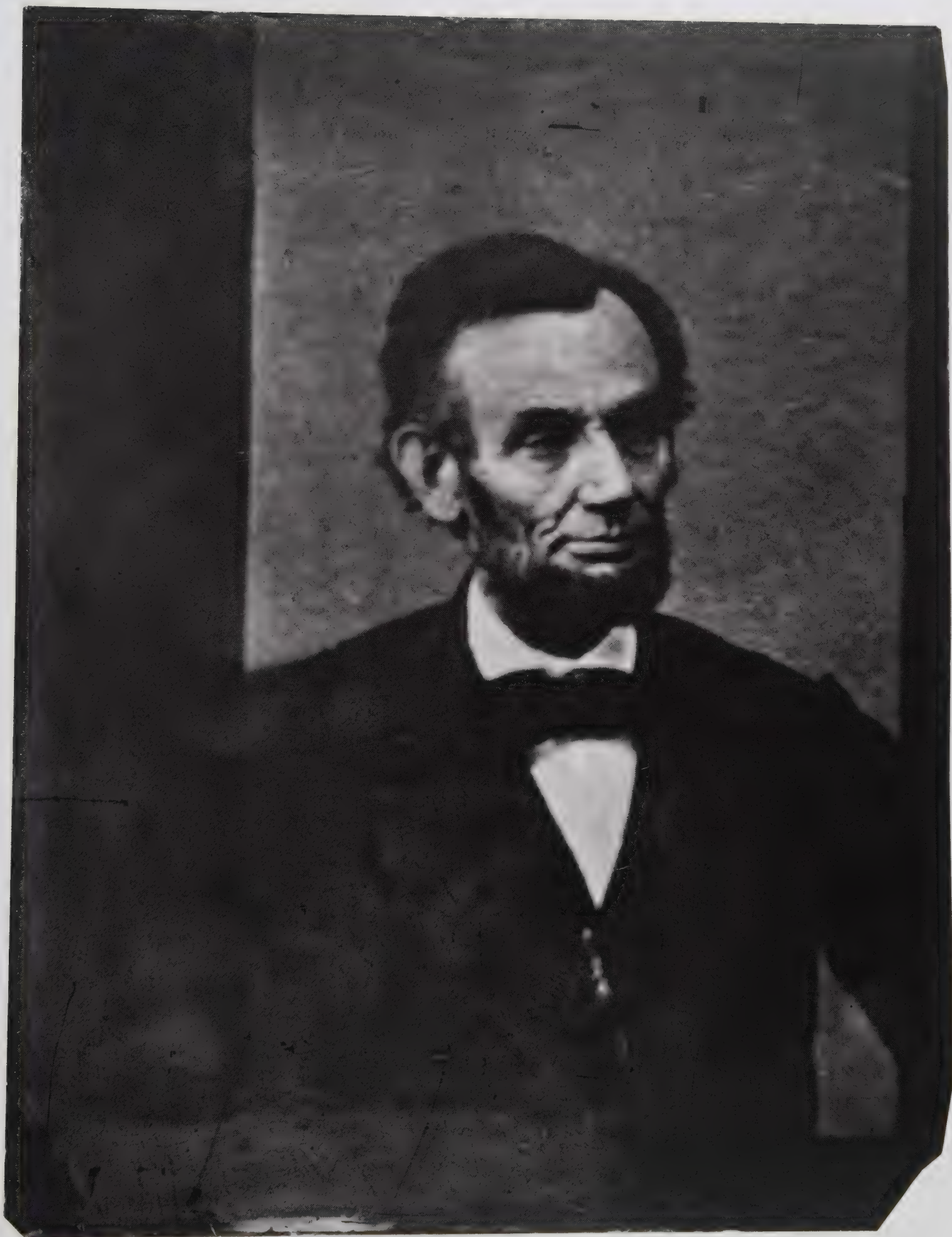


APRIL 20, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger

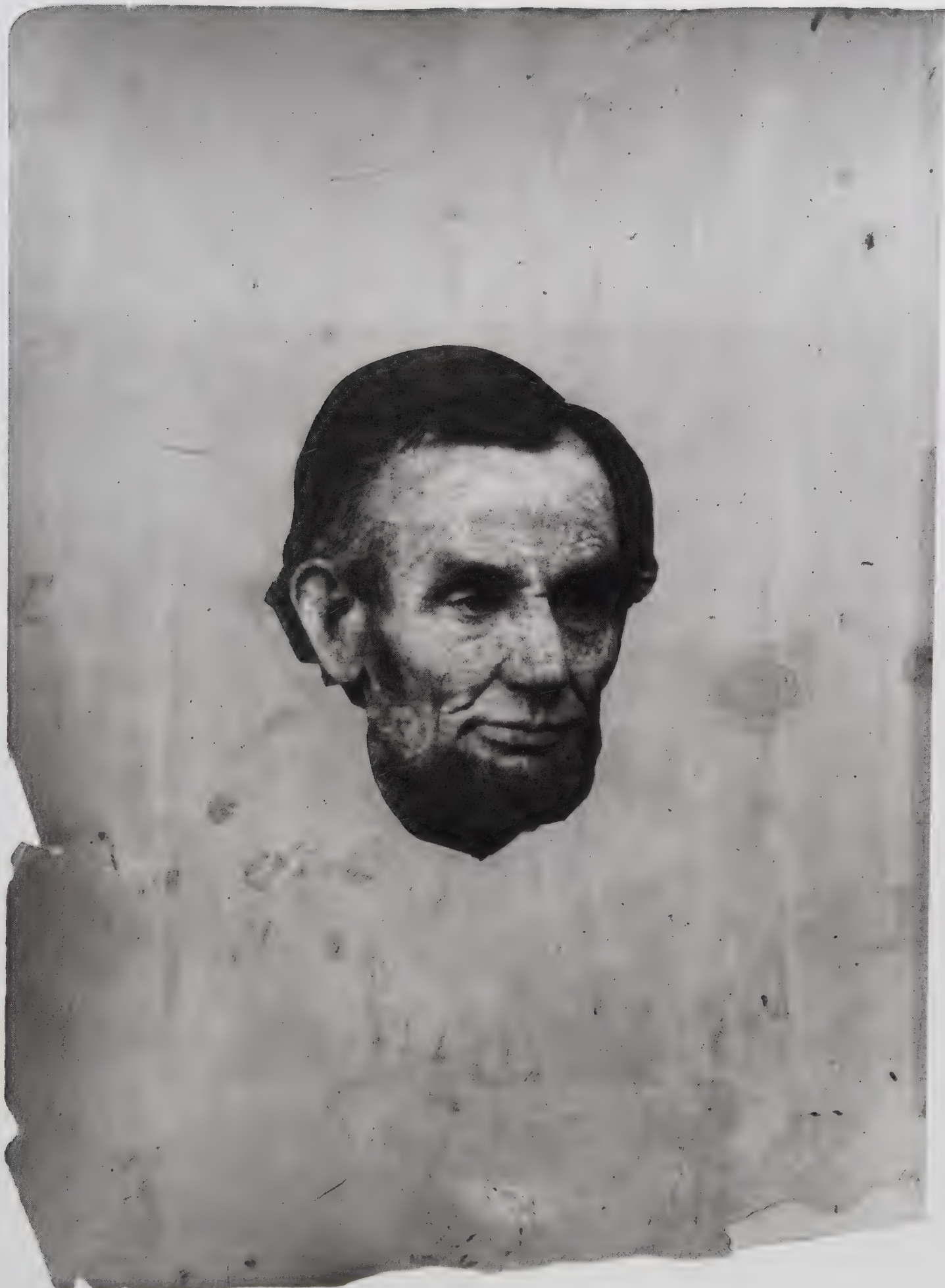




APRIL 20, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger





APRIL 26, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger



APRIL 26, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger





APRIL 26, 1864  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Anthony Berger







FEBRUARY 5, 1865

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



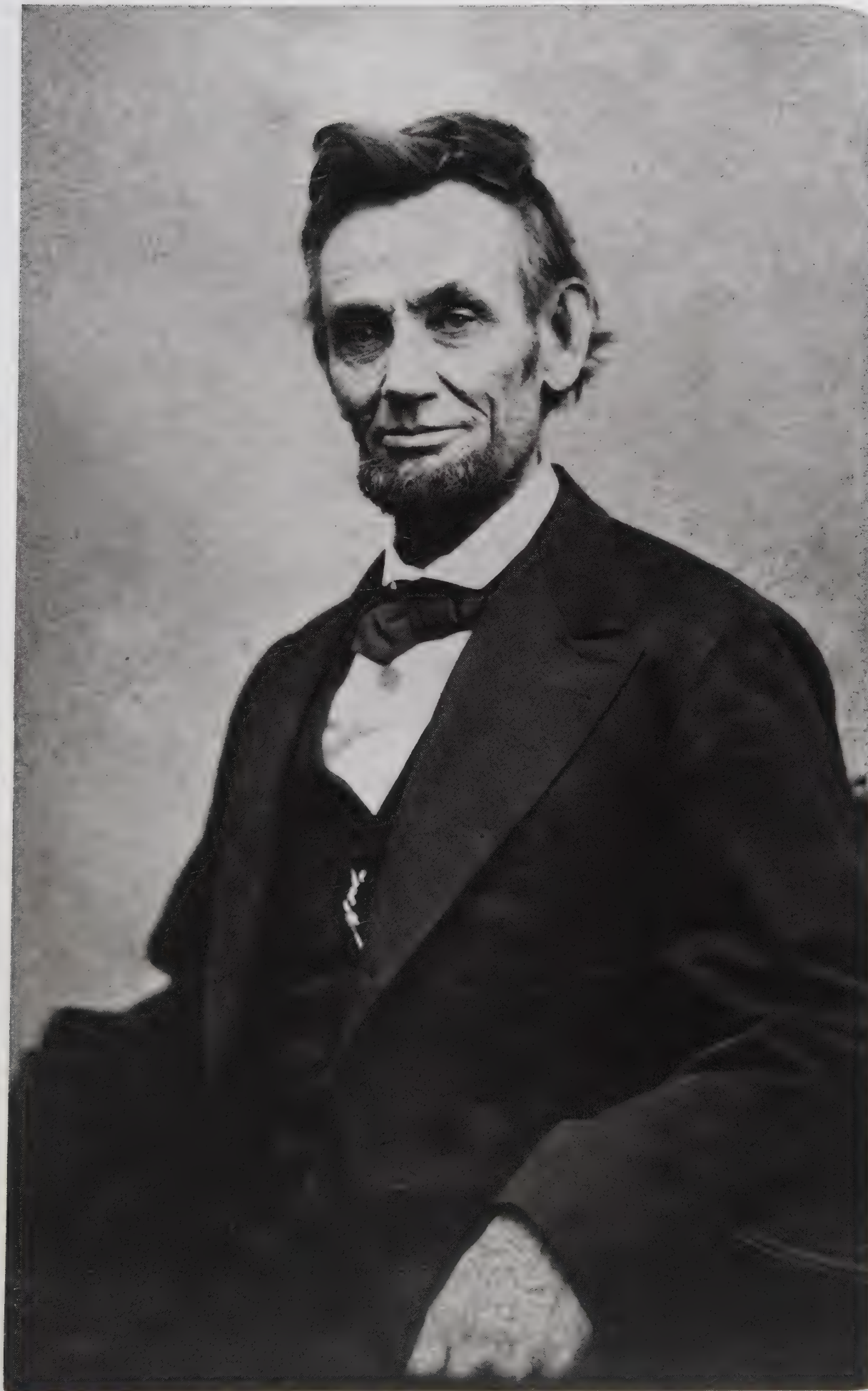
FEBRUARY 5, 1865

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner

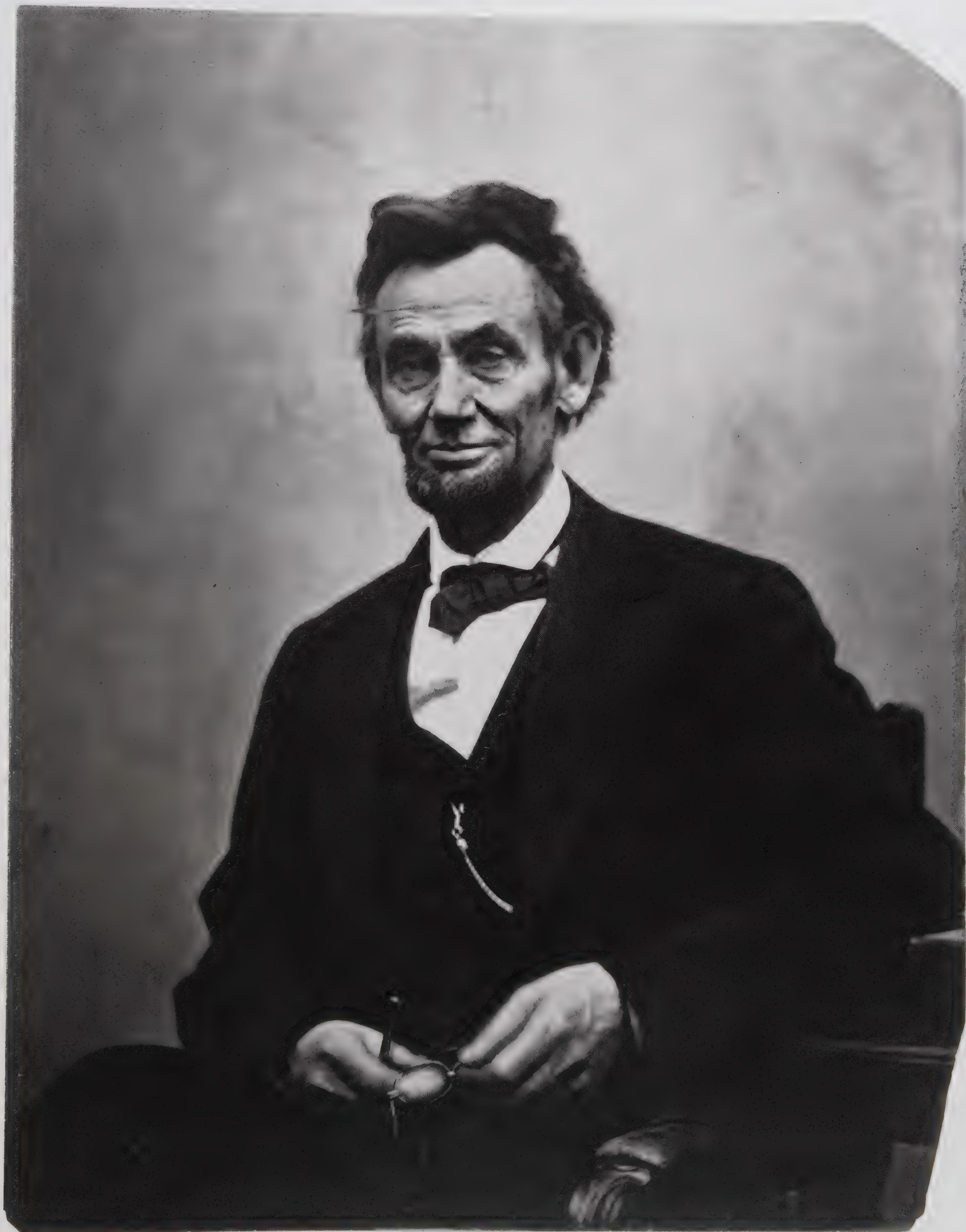




FEBRUARY 5, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner

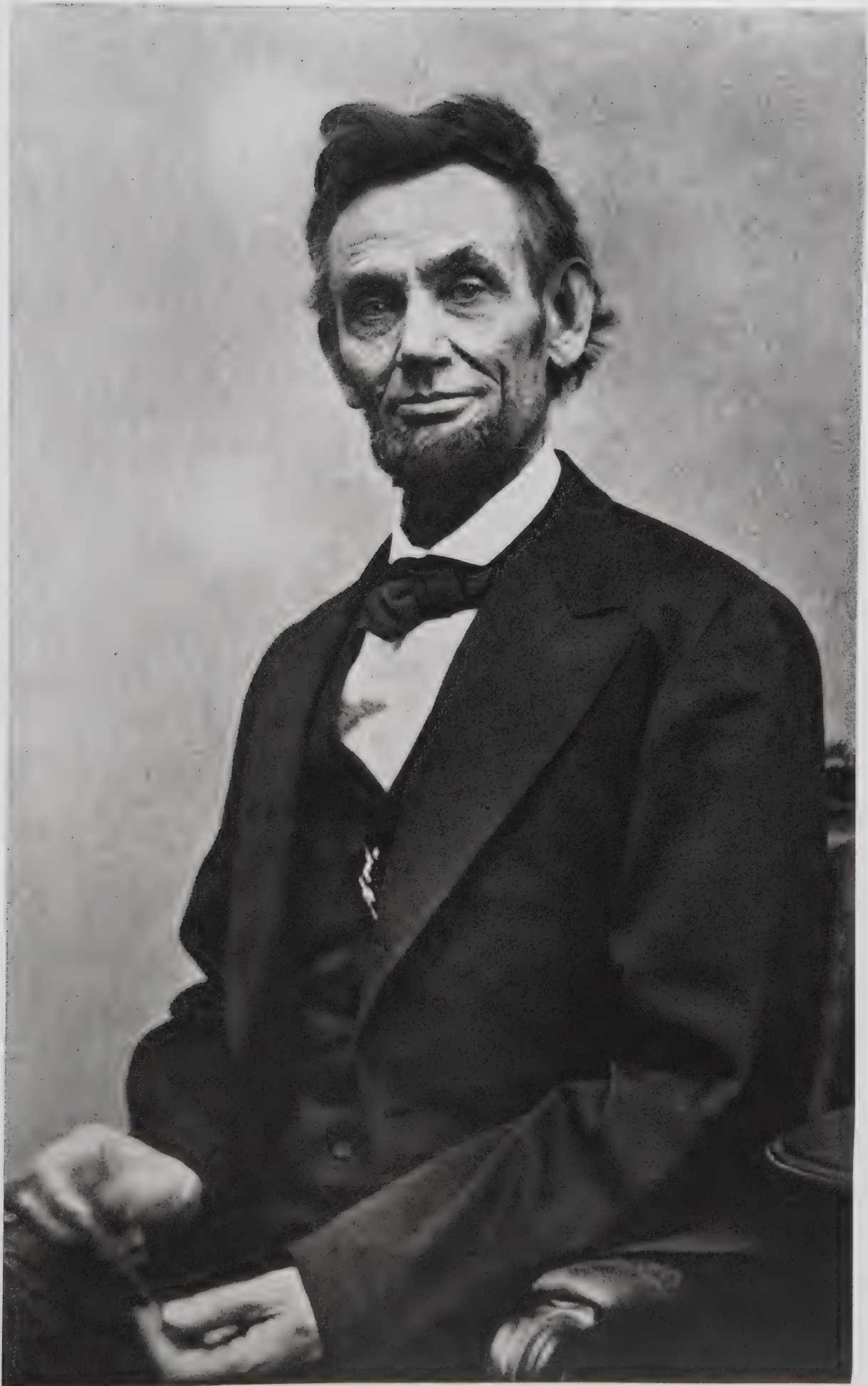




FEBRUARY 5, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner

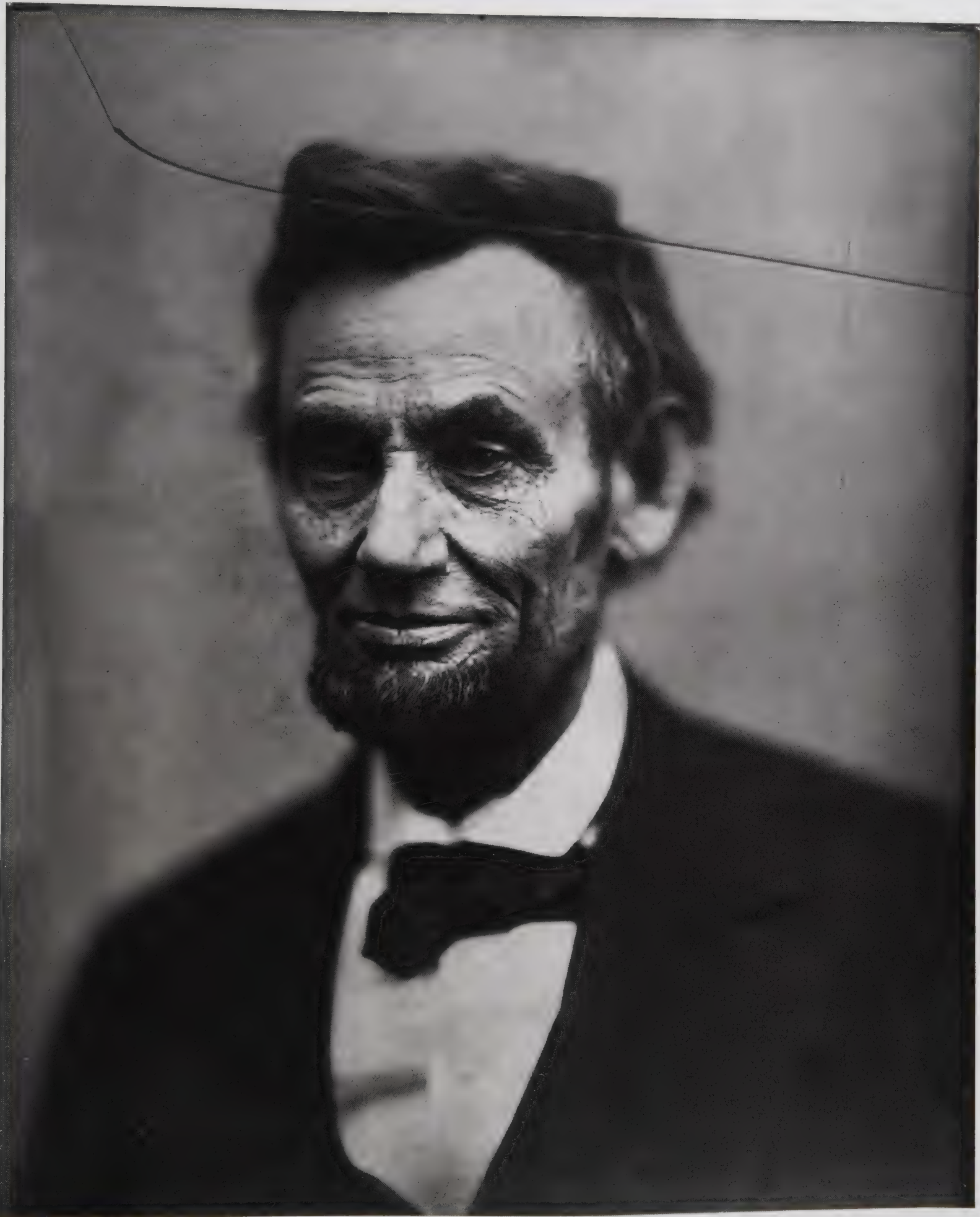


FEBRUARY 5, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



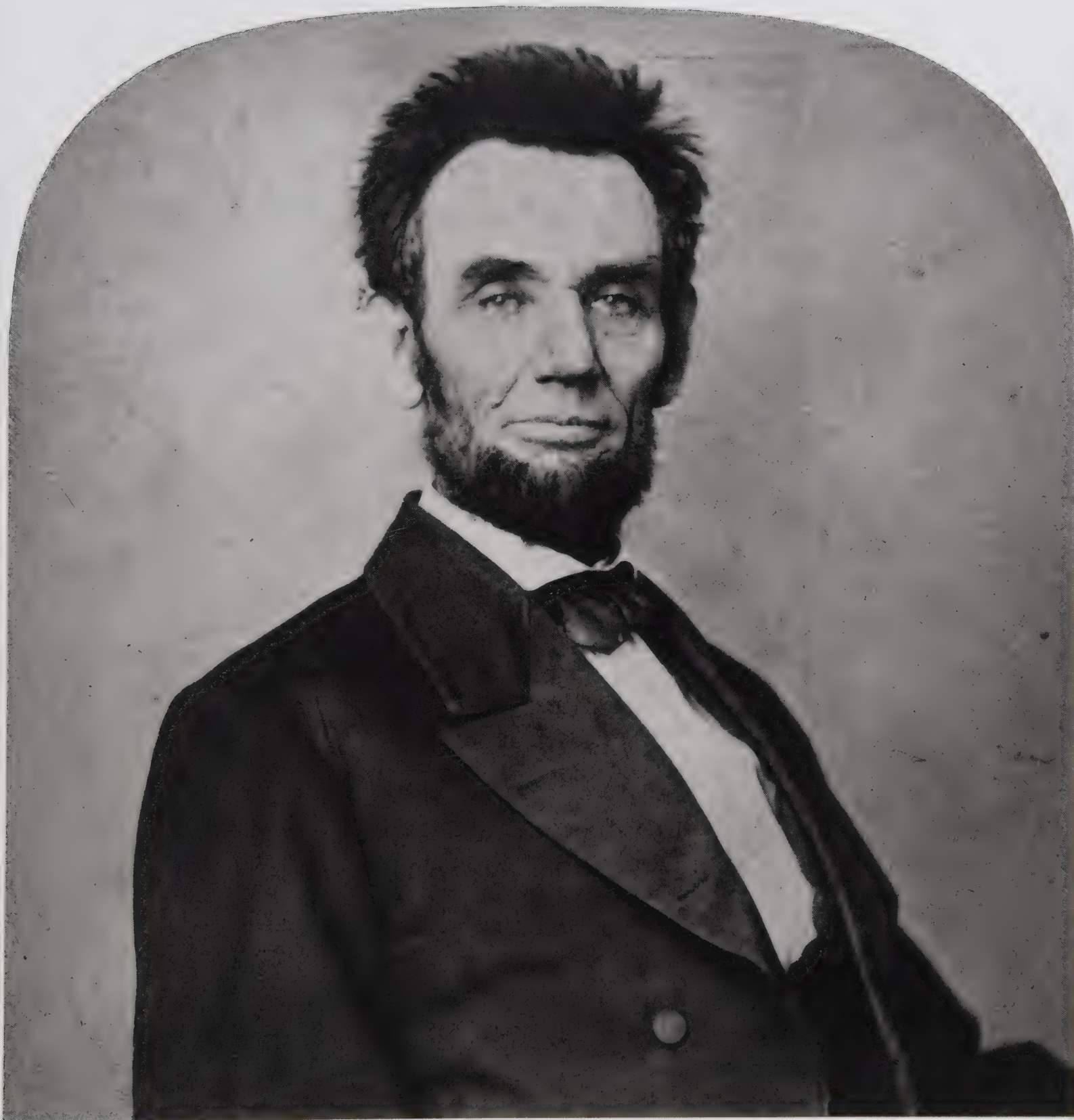


CIRCA FEBRUARY 1865

WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Lewis Emory Walker

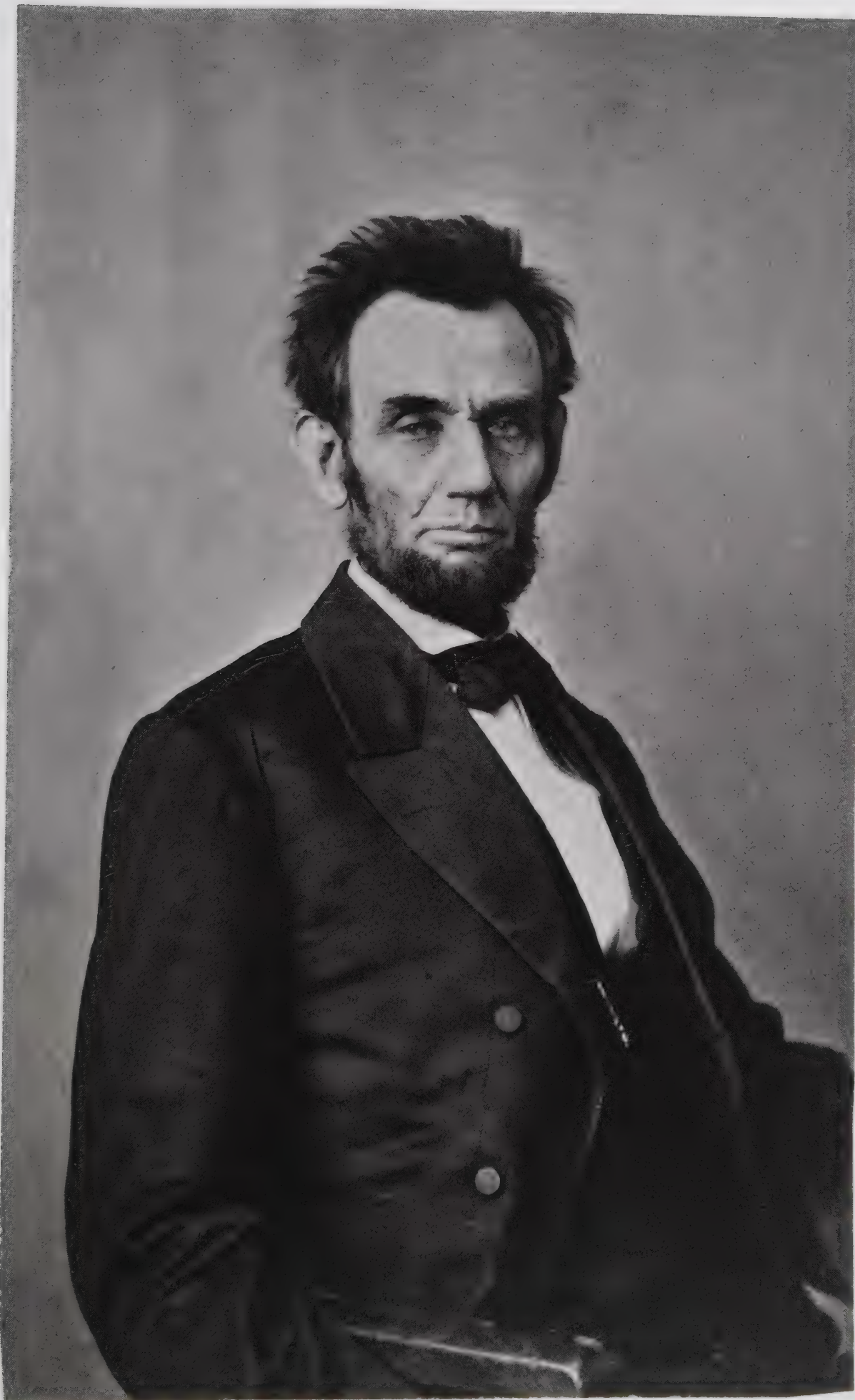




CIRCA FEBRUARY 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Lewis Emory Walker



MARCH 4, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



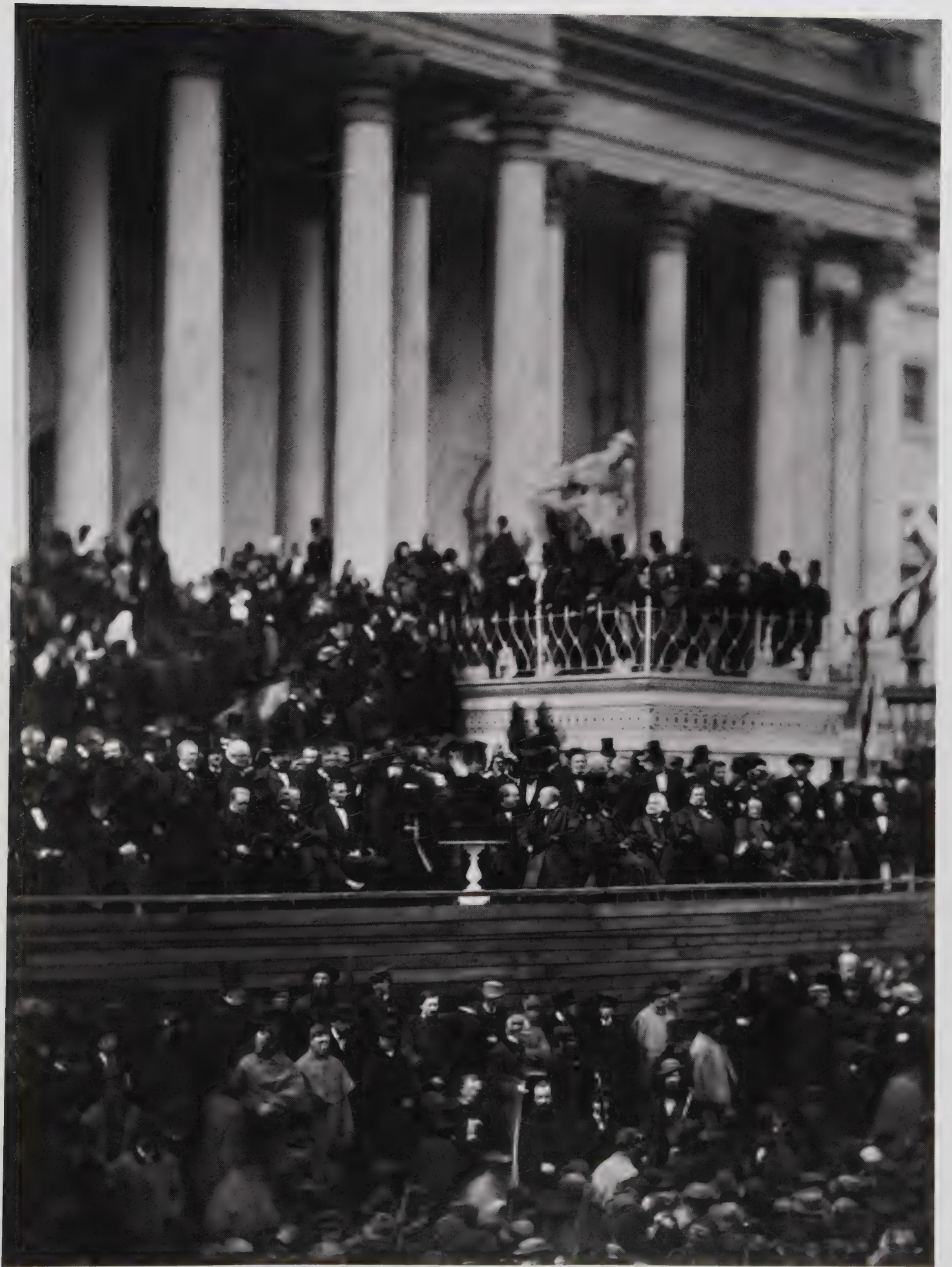


MARCH 4, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner







MARCH 4, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner



MARCH 4, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Alexander Gardner





MARCH 4, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by William Morris Smith



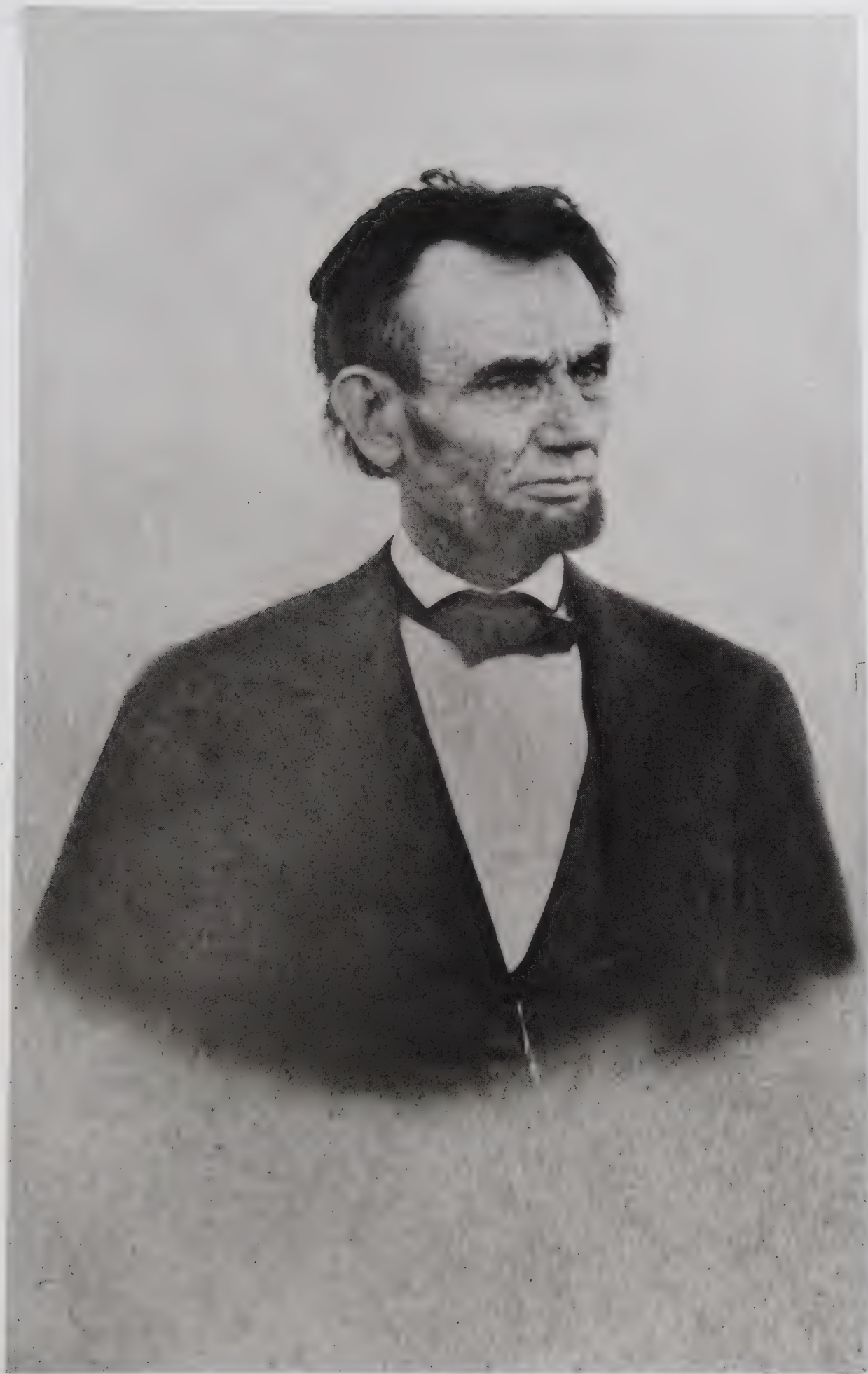




MARCH 6, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Photograph by Henry F. Warren



MARCH 6, 1865  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

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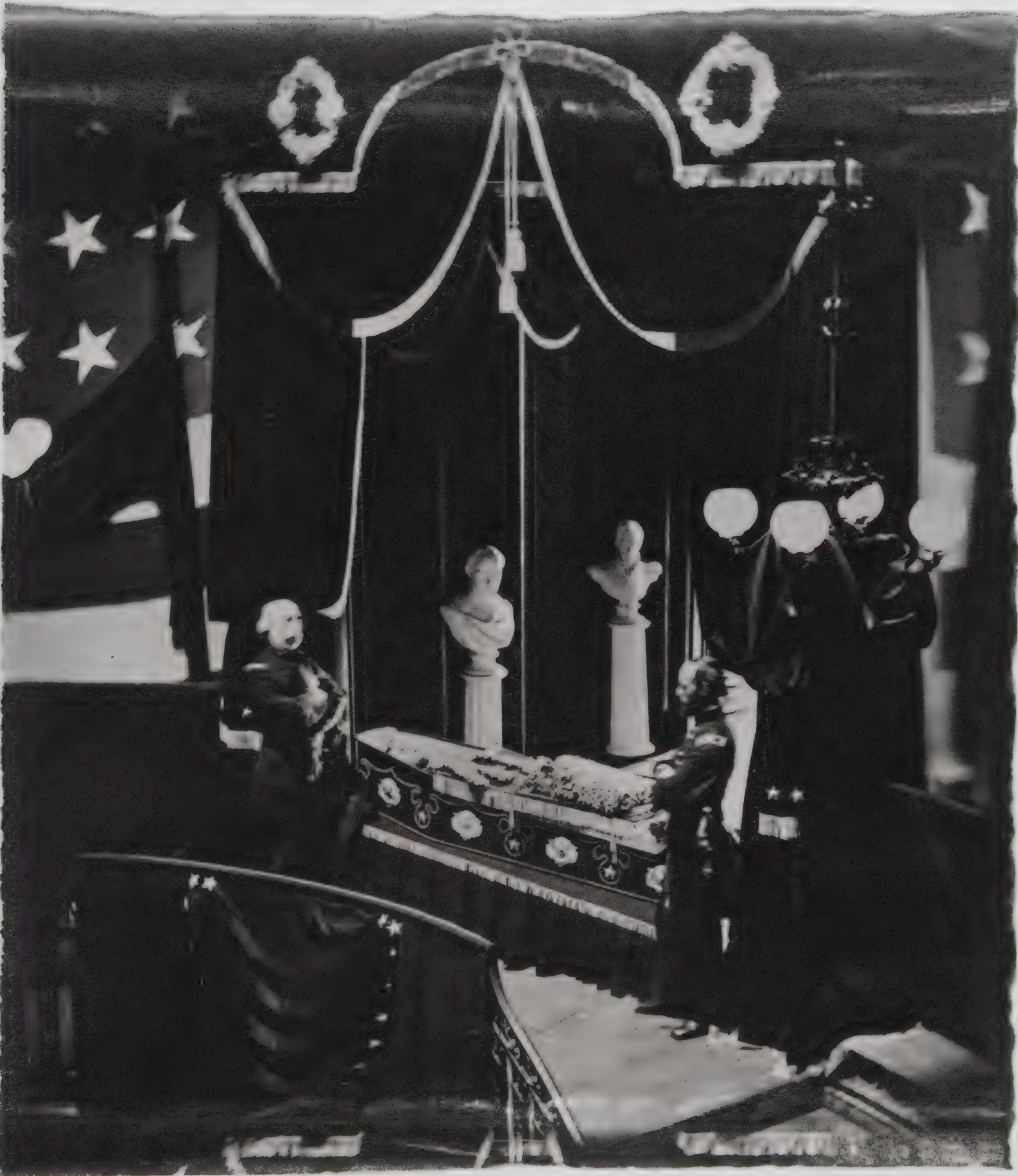


APRIL 24, 1865  
NEW YORK CITY

•

Photograph by Jeremiah Gurney, Jr.







## LIST OF PLATES

Each AL number includes the year the photograph was taken, a number indicating the portrait session, and, as needed, a letter differentiating poses at each session. The M, O, and L numbers indicate the systems used, respectively, in Frederick Hill Meserve and Carl Sandburg, *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944); Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln's Photographs: A Complete Album*, rev. ed. (Dayton, OH: Rockywood Press, 1998); and Stefan Lorant, *Lincoln: His Life in Photographs* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941).

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Photograph by Lewis  
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Photograph by Lewis  
Emory Walker  
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Gurney, Jr.  
New York City  
April 24, 1865  
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## ABOUT THE PORTRAITS

Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.

In the late nineteenth century, when my great-great-grandfather Frederick Hill Meserve began collecting, identifying, and preserving photographic portraits of Abraham Lincoln, he found himself at the center of a growing circle of historians, journalists, artists, writers, and collectors who shared a passion for what had become known as Lincolniana. A century later, what seems most remarkable is the trust these people placed in one another. "There was no rivalry, we were all friends helping one another," Meserve explained. "I carried their want lists in my pocket and they handed over to me the photographs that came to them."

Meserve was not a photography collector by any modern definition. He was an image collector, whose goal was to be comprehensive. To this end he amassed a huge collection of original photographs, copies of originals, and copies of copies. As he pieced together the scattered puzzle pieces that made up the overall photographic record of

Lincoln, he gave each image a number to indicate its chronological place in the sequence. His system, identified by the letter M, became the national standard.

In 1911, Meserve privately printed his first book, *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, with one hundred actual photographs mounted on handmade paper. Carl Sandburg wrote, “[When] collectors of Lincolniana . . . got a Lincoln photograph they compared it with those in the Meserve book [and] gave it the Meserve serial number. And if they couldn’t find it in Meserve, they sent him the original or a copy, saying, ‘This looks like a new one,’ and awaited the reply sure to come from Meserve.”

A century later, my father, my uncle, and I worked with a panel of Lincoln scholars to bring his numbers up to date. The original M numbering system has been replaced with an AL numbering system, devised with the help of James Barber at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. New research has necessitated changes to Meserve’s work and that of his successor Lloyd Ostendorf. Each AL number includes the year the photograph was taken, followed by a number to indicate the portrait session, and, as needed, a letter to differentiate poses at each session.

To compile this book, we combed through Meserve’s original prints, duplicates, copy images, modern prints, glass negatives, and modern negatives, then combined these with images from James Mellon’s set of Lincoln portraits. In the 1970s, Mellon meticulously duplicated Lincoln photographs he had collected, and traveled the country photographing first- and second-generation Lincoln images wherever he could find them, to produce his highly praised volume *The Face of Lincoln*. Because Meserve’s work was so central to Mellon’s project, he provided us with a full set of his images. After assembling all of the Meserve and Mellon prints, we selected what we determined were the highest-quality versions for scanning by the Steidl digital team.

Although many helped along the way with the preparation of this book, I owe special thanks to Gerhard Steidl for his skill in bringing old pictures to life. Thanks are also due to Harold Holzer and Philip B. Kunhardt III for their essays; to Jill Cowan, Mary Farley, Marisa Cardinale, James Jordan, Amanda Smith, Alex Revson, Bridget Slattery, Edith Kunhardt-Davis, and Anna Jardine; and to the Kunhardts—Katharine, Margie, Suzy, Abby, Teddy, George—and my father, Peter.

The record of the face of Lincoln owes itself to hundreds of individuals—to photographers, collectors, and scholars—and to a lengthy tradition of study and publication. From this century-old collaboration, which reflects the work of so many people, emerges a new portrait of Abraham Lincoln.



## TIME LINE OF THE MESERVE-KUNHARDT COLLECTION

For more than a century, the Meserve-Kunhardt Collection (begun in 1897 as the Meserve Collection) has been a “working collection,” used in the fields of education, art, and publishing. Frederick Hill Meserve collected nineteenth-century photographs and published them in books that illuminated the life of Abraham Lincoln and the people who were part of his world.

In 2002, the Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation was established to preserve and catalogue the roughly 80,000 photographs and negatives assembled by Frederick Hill Meserve and his daughter Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and passed down to later generations. What follows is a time line of the Meserve and Kunhardt work on Abraham Lincoln, which culminates with this Steidl publication for the 150th anniversary of his assassination.

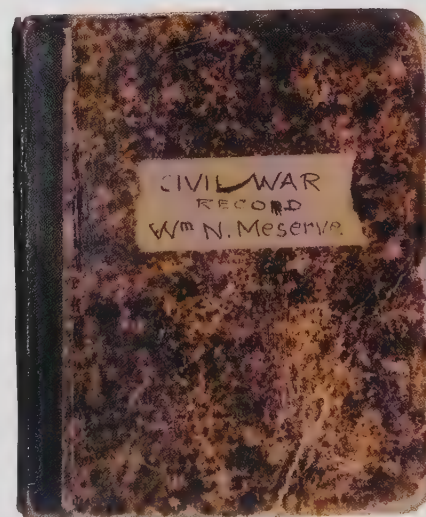
On July 28, 1862, William Neal Meserve enlisted in the army, against his father's will, answering President Lincoln's call for more soldiers to fight for the Union.



William Neal Meserve was shot twice during the battle of Antietam. "At the fence a bullet took the skin off my wrist and immediately another struck the same arm above the elbow," he later recalled. Frederick Hill Meserve discovered this photograph of the grim scene his father described in his diary.

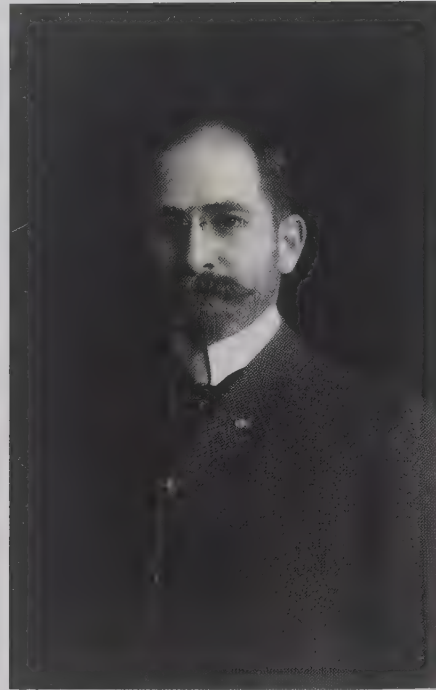


William Neal Meserve attained the rank of major and served in the Union Army until the end of the war. He recorded his experience in field diaries and later used them to write his *Civil War Record*, an early version of his memoirs that became the basis of his final text. Meserve's original diaries were destroyed in the San Francisco fire of 1906.



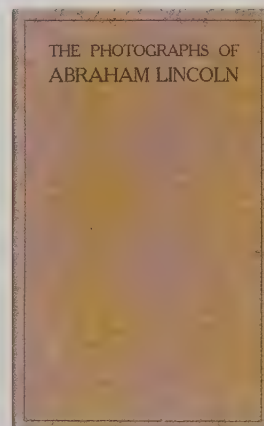
1865

Frederick Hill Meserve, William's first son, was born in 1865, the year Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. At the end of the 1800s, Frederick began collecting photographs to illustrate his father's war record. The result was a handmade book titled *A Volunteer: The Story of Service in the Civil War*.

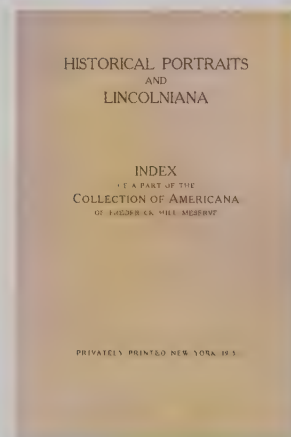


1911

Frederick Hill Meserve's goal was to collect every photograph ever taken of Abraham Lincoln and place the images in chronological order. When he privately published *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln* in 1911, it included one hundred portraits.



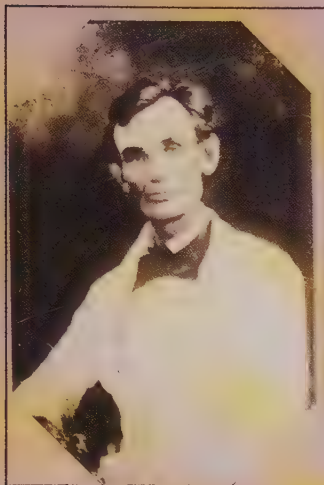
Over a number of years, Meserve published handmade editions of a twenty-eight-volume series he called *Historical Portraits and Lincolniana*. Each set of books included nearly 8,000 actual photographs of prominent figures from the nineteenth century.





Photographs of Lincoln in 1858  
from The MESERVE Collection

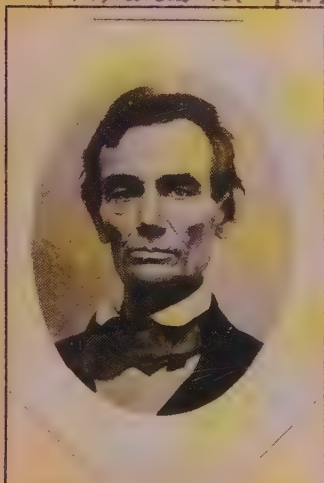
148 East 78<sup>th</sup> St  
New York



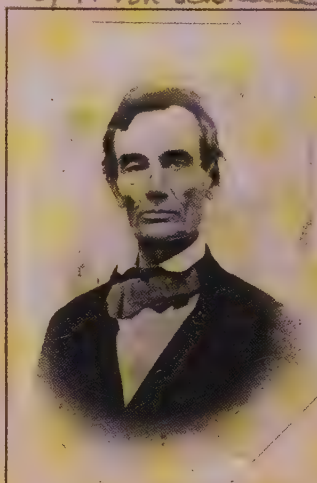
MESERVE No. 7  
Beardstown, Ill.  
May 7, 1858  
by Abraham B. Ryer



MESERVE No. 3  
Chicago, Ill.  
July 10, 1858  
by P. von Schneider



MESERVE No. 10  
Macomb, Ill.  
Aug. 26, 1858  
by W. P. Pearson



MESERVE No. 11  
Macomb, Ill.  
Aug. 28, 1858  
by W. P. Pearson

A page from one of Meserve's Lincoln workbooks, in which he listed the locations, dates, and photographers of each Lincoln photograph he had recorded. His numbering system became the standard by which Lincoln images were identified for nearly a century.

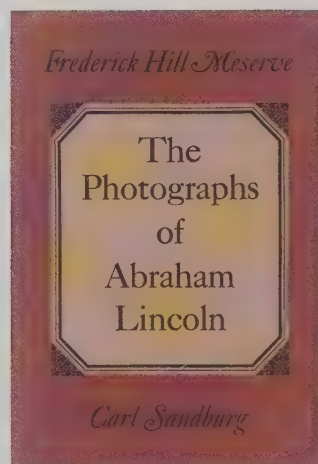
1936

Meserve formed a close friendship with Lincoln biographer Ida M. Tarbell, with whom he appeared at an exhibition on Lincoln in New York City.



1944

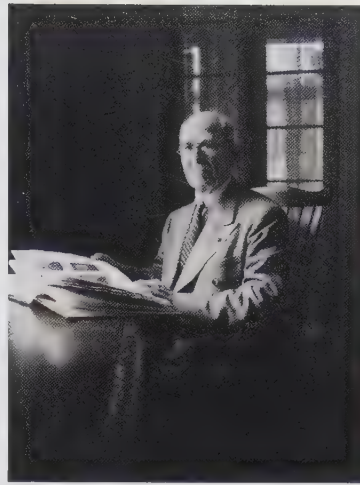
*The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, published by Frederick Hill Meserve and Carl Sandburg in 1944, included 120 portraits.



Meserve's closest colleague and collecting partner was his daughter Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt. She was best known for her children's books, including *Pat the Bunny*, but her passion was Lincoln.



In *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, Carl Sandburg wrote, "There are collectors who are hobbyists, fans, faddists, enthusiasts, eccentrics, cranks, bugs. Meserve is the Zealot."



1956

Frederick Hill Meserve presenting his favorite photograph of Lincoln, taken by Alexander Gardner in 1865, to his grandson Bernie Peyton.



1962

Meserve lived to age ninety-six. He left his collection to Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt.

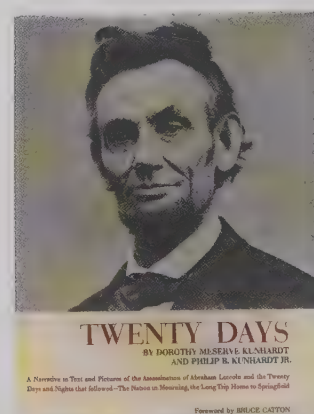




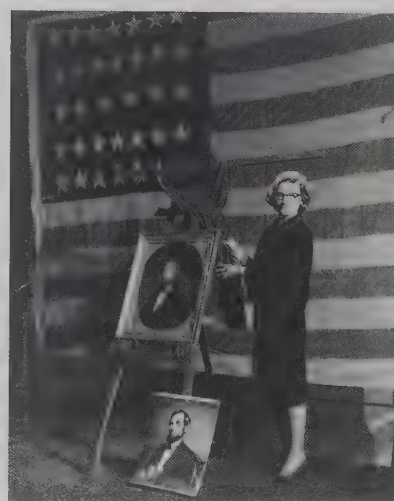
Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Meserve's grandson and Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt's son, was an editor at *Life* magazine in the 1960s and 1970s. He and his mother opened the Collection to a new generation of readers.



Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.'s *Twenty Days*, published in 1965, told the story of Lincoln's assassination and funeral. These events had never been so thoroughly chronicled in photographs before.

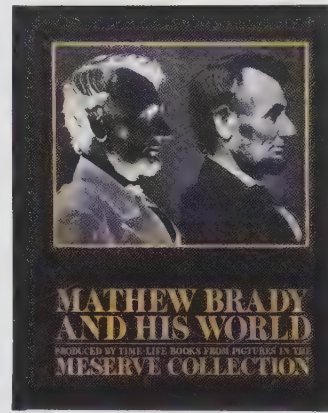


In 1965, Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt served on the centennial commission commemorating Lincoln on the hundredth anniversary of his assassination.



1977

The last collaboration between Dorothy and Philip was *Mathew Brady and His World*.

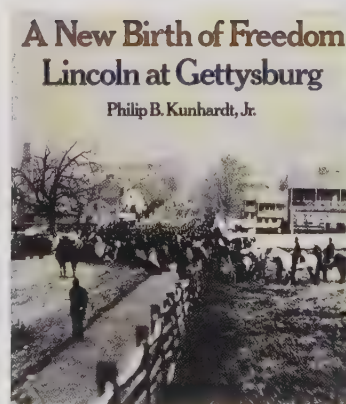


1980s

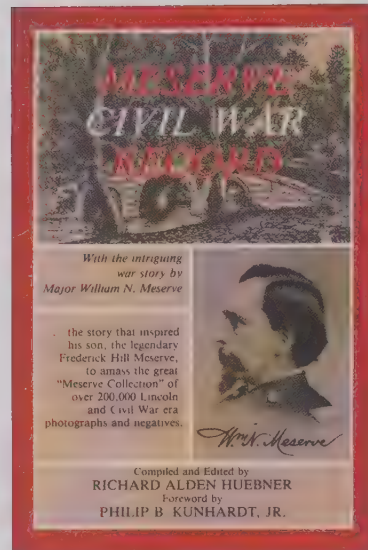
In 1981, more than 5,000 Mathew Brady glass negatives from the Meserve Collection were sold to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Dorothy passed the rest of the Collection on to Philip.



In 1983, Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., published *A New Birth of Freedom*, which told the very personal story of Lincoln's famous speech at Gettysburg.

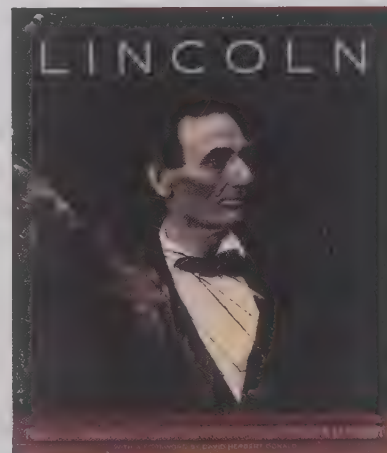


William Neal Meserve's memoirs were published, as *Meserve Civil War Record*, by his great-grandson Richard Alden Huebner in 1987.



1992-1999

Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., collaborated with his sons Philip and Peter in producing books and films using the Collection. Among their publications were *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography* (1992), *P. T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman* (1995), and *The American President* (1999).

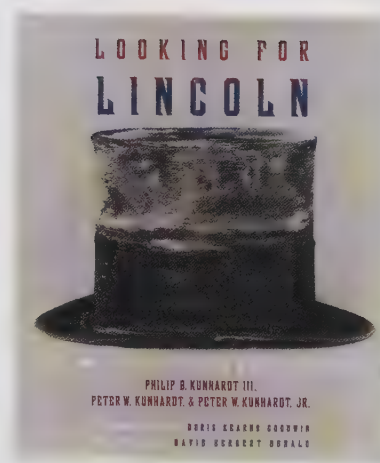


Philip (left) and Peter Kunhardt with their father (seated), who over time passed the Collection on to them.

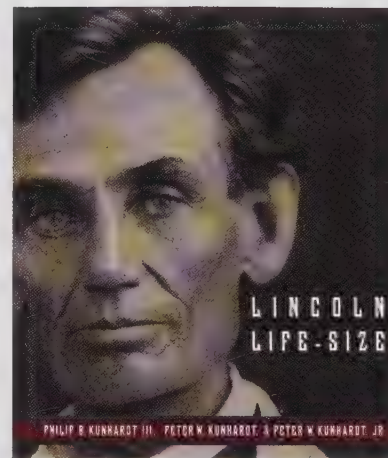




*Looking for Lincoln*, by Meserve descendants Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr. (2008), relied on the Collection to trace the story of how the sixteenth president became an American legend.



*Lincoln Life-Size*, by Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr. (2009), featured portraits of Lincoln printed the same size as his actual face, based on measurements from a three-dimensional scan of his life mask.



Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr., from the fifth generation after William Neal Meserve, continues to study Lincoln's portraits in an effort to update Meserve's century-old numbering system, with the help of his uncle Philip B. Kunhardt III, his father Peter W. Kunhardt, James Barber, Harold Holzer, Thomas Schwartz, and Daniel Weinberg.



## BIOGRAPHIES

FREDERICK HILL MESERVE (1865–1962) was one of America's earliest collectors of photography. His interest began when he set out to illustrate his father's Civil War diary. Starting in 1897 and working for the next half-century, Meserve built up a massive collection of photographs of Abraham Lincoln and instituted a numbering system for them that is still cited today. Meserve was credited by the *New York Herald Tribune* with "turning collecting Lincoln pictures into an important historical enterprise."

HAROLD HOLZER is Chairman of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, official successor organization of the U.S. Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which he co-chaired for nine years, appointed by President Bill Clinton. Holzer is the author, coauthor, or editor of forty-seven books on Lincoln and the Civil War era. His latest is *Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion* (2014). His other recent books include *Lincoln: How Abraham Lincoln Ended Slavery in America* (2012), the official young-adult companion book for the Steven Spielberg film *Lincoln*, for which he served as script consultant; and *The Civil War in 50 Objects* (2013), which traces the conflict through the collections of the New-York Historical Society, where he serves as the Roger Hertog Fellow. A frequent guest on television and the winner of many annual and lifetime achievement awards for his work, Holzer was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President George W. Bush in 2008.

PHILIP B. KUNHARDT III is Distinguished Scholar in Residence in the Humanities at New York University and teaches history and biography in the College of Arts and Science. He has coauthored five books and has written and co-produced historical documentaries for PBS, ABC, HBO, Discovery, and other networks. He is Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Transformative Lives, which he established at NYU in 2011. The Center fosters research, teaching, and education involving the lives of exemplary individuals whose dedication, genius, and moral vision have helped shape the course of human events.

PETER W. KUNHARDT, JR., is Executive Director of the Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation and The Gordon Parks Foundation. Recent museum exhibitions in which he has been involved include *Gordon Parks: Back to Fort Scott* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), *Gordon Parks: Segregation Story* (High Museum of Art, Atlanta), *Gordon Parks: The Making of an Argument* (New Orleans Museum of Art), *Gordon Parks: A Harlem Family 1967* (The Studio Museum in Harlem), and *Lincoln, Life-Size* (Bruce Museum of Arts and Science, Greenwich, Connecticut). He coedited the multivolume *Gordon Parks: Collected Works*, published by Steidl in 2012, and coauthored *Looking for Lincoln: The Making of American Icon* (2008) and *Lincoln, Life-Size* (2009). He is responsible for the Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation's acquisition of the archive of *Life* photographer Ed Clark. Kunhardt has helped establish ten scholarships granted annually to young artists.

## MESERVE-KUNHARDT FOUNDATION

48 Wheeler Avenue, Pleasantville, New York 10570 • mkfound.org

The Meserve-Kunhardt Foundation is a New York State 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to the preservation of photography and the use of it to inform, educate, and inspire. The Foundation's holdings include the Meserve-Kunhardt Collection, the Dorothy Kunhardt Collection, the Gordon Parks Collection, and the Ed Clark Collection. The Foundation preserves and disseminates its holdings through exhibitions, publications, and multimedia educational programs that illustrate the power of visual learning.

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First edition published in 2015

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Book design: Duncan Whyte, Steidl design  
Scans by Steidl's digital darkroom

Separations by Steidl's digital darkroom  
Production and printing: Steidl, Göttingen

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ISBN 978-3-86930-917-0  
Printed in Germany by Steidl















